

KOREAN CINEMA TODAY

OCTOBER 2020 | Vol.37

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AHN Jae-huun

Director of The Shaman Sorceress

Justin KIM

Producer of Korean-Indonesian Co-production

LEE Taewoong

Producer of Modern Korea

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Korean Independent Films
in 2020



영화진흥위원회
Korean Film Council

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KOREAN CINEMA TODAY

October 2020 | Vol.37

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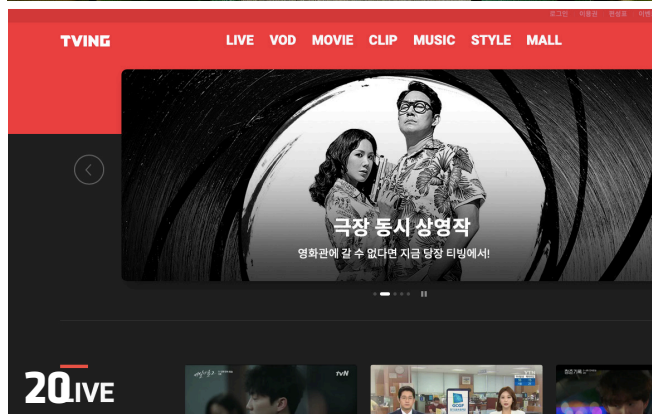
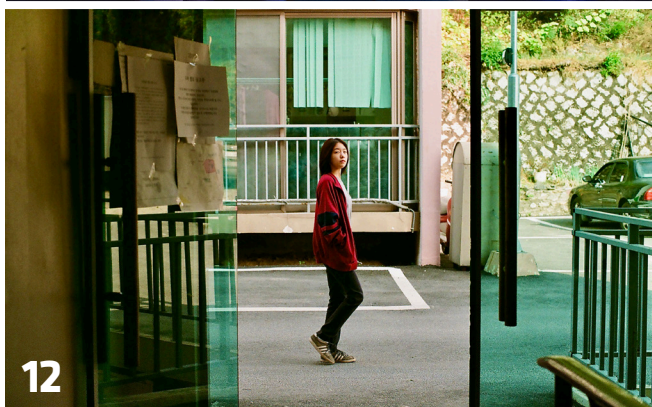
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LEE Jung-jae



BONG Joon Ho Makes Time 100 List, Preps American Update of *SEA FOG*

Director BONG Joon Ho has been selected as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in Time Magazine's influential annual Time 100 List. Frequent collaborator Tilda Swinton wrote some words to honor him, describing him as "the filmmaker who, this year, has risen into the 2020 vision of the entire cine-passionate planet like a new sun," as well as "Whip-smart, highly skilled, supremely cine-literate, exuberant, irreverent, self-determining, deeply romantic, with a voracious delight in the absurd, highly principled, precision-tuned, compassionate to the last."

The Academy Award-winning *Parasite* (2019) filmmaker is also gearing up to produce an American version of *Haemoo*, the 2014 sea-bound thriller he produced and co-wrote with director SHIM Sung-bo. Titled *Sea Fog*, the film will be helmed by *Calibre* director Matt Palmer with production company Participant attached.

Haemoo, which was released in the summer of 2014, was the directorial debut of SHIM Sung-bo, who wrote the script of *Memories of Murder* (2003) with director BONG. The film starred KIM Yun-seok as the captain of a schooner that takes on board illegal immigrants at sea to smuggle them into Korea, but everything doesn't go according to plan. *Haemoo* was adapted by SHIM and BONG from a stage play of the same name that was itself based on true events. Palmer, whose acclaimed thriller *Calibre* was a prize winner at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and bowed on Netflix in 2018, is writing the screenplay, which he will adapt from an earlier version penned by Oren Moverman.

by Pierce Conran

photographed by BAEK Jong-heon



Director BONG Joon Ho

KIM Bora to Direct *SPECTRUM*, Lezhin Studios to Produce



Director KIM Bora

KIM Bora, the director of the breakout indie sensation *House of Hummingbird* (2018), has signed on to her sophomore feature-length project. The award-winning director will adapt the sci-fi story 'Spectrum' from

KIM Cho-yeob's short story collection 'If We Cannot Move at the Speed of Light (Hubble)'. *Spectrum* concerns communication between humans and aliens through language and the senses. Writer KIM Cho-yeob is one of the most popular contemporary sci-fi authors in Korea. *House of Hummingbird* debuted in the New Currents section of the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in 2018 before embarking on one of the most successful festival runs of any Korean film. It had its international premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it earned the Grand Prix for the Best Feature in the Generation 14plus competition, and picked up three prizes at the Tribeca Film Festival. The film ultimately won 59 prizes from international film events and domestic industry awards.

Lezhin Studios, a new film investment and production company, is developing the project. Lezhin is also currently working on several major series for Netflix, including YEON Sang-ho's *Hellbound* and HAN Jun-hee's *D.P.* ㉠

by Pierce Conran | photographed by OH Kye Ohk

THE WAILING Director NA Hong-jin to return as producer of Thai-language film

Directors NA Hong-jin and Banjong PISANTHANAKUN announced that they are working together on a new horror project named *Rangsong* (working title), with NA serving as producer and PISANTHANAKUN in the directing chair.

After much speculations as to where NA would go next following his unanimously acclaimed mystery horror *The Wailing* (2016), Showbox revealed on September 23 that the director is producing Banjong PISANTHANAKUN's next film.

Coming probably as no surprise to fans of NA's previous outing, this project will revolve around Thai shamanism, with the title *Rangsong* being Thai for "spirit medium". NA is in charge of planning and producing and has also been directly involved in the original script, while PISANTHANAKUN will be directing. PISANTHANAKUN debuted to much praise with the horror classic *Shutter* (2004) before releasing *Pee Mak* (2013), the first film to cross the THB 1 billion (USD 33 million) threshold in box office revenue in Thailand, with an estimated 10 million admissions, remaining the highest-grossing film in Thailand ever since. *Rangsong* isn't the first Korea-related project for the Thai director, as he previously helmed the romcom *Hello, Stranger* (2009), which was almost entirely filmed in Korea.

The film is being co-produced by Northern Cross – NA's own production company – and Thailand-based major studio GDH 559, which has been responsible for recent Thai hits such as *Bad Genius* (2017), *Tootsies & The Fake* (2019) and *Happy Old Year* (2019). Showbox, which is also financing the project, will distribute the film in Korea and is managing international sales. *Rangsong* is planned for release in 2021.

by Fabien Schneider

photographed by BAEK Jong-heon



Director NA Hong-jin

GONG Yoo, BAE Doo-na and LEE Joon Dive into THE SEA OF SILENCE



GONG Yoo, BAE Doo-na and LEE Joon have all signed on to star in *The Sea of Silence*, a new sci-fi horror thriller series for Netflix. The series will be produced by superstar JUNG Woo-sung and helmed by CHOI Hang-yong who is expanding the material from his own short film of the same name.

Set in the future, *The Sea of Silence* will show the human race grappling with the consequences of desertification, which has left the earth without enough food or water. A team is assembled to retrieve samples from an abandoned moon base, comprising astrobiologist Dr. Song Ji-an (BAE Doo-na), team leader Ha Yoon-jae (GONG Yoo) and talented engineer RYU Taek-seok (LEE Joon). *Train to Busan* (2016) star GONG Yoo has two upcoming films, the sci-fi action *Seobok* and the sci-fi drama *Wonderland* (literal title). BAE has appeared in the global hit *Sense8* and the streaming platform's original Korean hit, *Kingdom*. Former MBLAQ member LEE Joon has appeared in *Luck-key* (2016).

The Sea of Silence is being scripted by PARK Eun-gyo, who served as a co-writer on BONG Joon Ho's acclaimed *Mother* (2009). 

by Pierce Conra

photographed by SON Hong-joo, BAEK Jong-heon

KOFIC Takes Various Measures Against COVID-19



© CJ CGV

KOFIC to support disinfection in theater due to COVID-19.

KOFIC SUPPORTS

SALES COMPANIES			POST-PRODUCTION COMPANIES	
ACEMAKER	CGV P&A	CGV P&A	CGV P&A	CGV P&A
FINECUT	INDIE STORY	K-MOVIE ENTERTAINMENT	kth	LIBERTY PICTURES
LOTTE	M LINE	OCON STUDIOS	SHOWBOX	UNIFILM

The Korean Film Council (KOFIC) has made various efforts to combat the impact of COVID-19 on the Korean film industry. The establishment of the 'Coronavirus Task Force' on March 24 was soon followed by the launch of the Korean Cinema COVID-19 Countermeasure Committee. Since then, a supplementary budget of KRW 17 billion—on top of the annual budget of KRW 88.9 billion—has been executed to provide support for theatrical releases special vocational trainings, small to medium-sized theater screenings and film viewings. In particular, discount coupons—worth KRW 6,000 each—have been distributed through the Back to Theater Campaign since June 4, thereby bringing people back to movie theaters. With the government's third revised supplementary budget, KOFIC currently offers support in the following areas: ensuring on-site health and safety, taking preventive measures against the coronavirus on filming locations, promotion and marketing expenses towards theatrical releases, personnel expenses for distribution,

production of employment-linked new media video content and further distribution of discount coupons. Meanwhile, KOFIC's International Relations Team continues to run 'contact-free' activities to promote Korean companies, actors and films from Korea. 'KOFIC Supports' introduces Korean film sales companies to overseas buyers, as international sales have diminished due to the cancellation of film markets and the shift to online. The campaign also issues a weekly newsletter—sent out every Thursday—that provides information on their latest line-ups. Please visit the KoBiz website (http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/eng/kofic/kofic_supports.jsp) to subscribe to the newsletter. The publication of *Korean Actors 200*, a book containing the filmography of 200 Korean actors, is scheduled for 2021. In addition, a new English-language TV program titled *K-Cinema Magazine* will be aired on Arirang TV and then posted on KoBiz's YouTube channel.

by KIM Hye-seon (Film Journalist)

Korean Film Council Steps Up to Help Film Industries at home and abroad



The Korean Film Council (KOFIC) recently participated in two events aimed at outlining solutions to help the struggling movie industry overcome the unprecedented crisis.

First was “Post-COVID Era – Preparing for the Next 100 Years of Korean Cinema”, a conference co-organized by KOFIC as part of a series of forums gathered under the title “Emergency Diagnosis of the Five Big Issues in Culture, Sports and Tourism” and coordinated by assemblyperson LIM O-kyeong.

Held in Korea’s National Assembly Members’ Office Building, Seoul, on August 7, this conference consisted of two presentations, with CHOI Jeong-hwa, President of the Producers Guild of Korea, giving a lecture on “The Influence of COVID-19 on the Whole Film Industry”, while Professor CHOI Hang-seop of Kookmin University addressed the “Trends of the New Normal in the Post-Covid Era”. The discussion that followed was hosted by film critic and KOFIC vice-chairperson KIM Young-jin and saw the participation of film producer and Barunson E&A CEO KWAK Shin-ae, film director and Directors Guild of Korea co-president MIN Gyu-dong, actor and KOFIC commissioner KIM Yeo-jin, CJ CGV strategy support director CHO Sung-jin and SK Broadband Media Strategy Department Head KIM Hyeok.

KOFIC also took part in the Film Industry Conference Online 2020 (FIC 2020) hosted by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, which was held – online, of course – from September 11 to 15. KOFIC Chairperson OH Seok-geun served as a panelist for “The Role of Film Commissions in Supporting ASEAN Industries”, one of the eight freely accessible public sessions offered this year. Launched in 2017, FIC is an event that provides Filipino filmmakers with opportunities to create and distribute co-production projects.

by Fabien Schneider

Inauguration of New Support Center ‘Indieground’



New support center Indieground (headed by CHO Young-kag) was officially inaugurated on August 28, in the coworking space Local Stitch in Central Seoul. The ceremony was downsized and invited limited to a few officials amid a recent new outbreak of COVID-19.

Established by the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) and operated by the Association of Korean Independent Film & Video, Indieground aims to cultivate a more sustainable environment for independent and arthouse film distribution and to consider new channels of exhibition.

“In order to develop Korean cinema, independent films, with their explorations of new territories, should be widely recognized”, said KOFIC chairperson OH Seok-geun in his speech. “I hope Indieground will become a safe haven for indie films”.

AHN Shin-young, Head of the Audiovisual Content Industry Division of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, was also present and shared his hope that “with Indieground, more people will get to feel the vivacious energy found in Korean independent films and be drawn by their charms.” One of the first projects carried out by Indieground will be the Indie Film Library, whereby it will select 70 indie works to receive an exhibition support grant. ㉠

by Fabien Schneider

*Deliver Us From Evil*

2020 Korean
Jan-Sep
Box Office Report

Slow but Steady Recovery

Annual box office reports are tools that can help to assess the health of a country's theatrical exhibition sector and perhaps determine where the industry finds itself at that point in time or where it may be headed. Needless to say, in 2020, writing such a report is challenging and may not be able to serve the same kind of

comparative function. That said, while the following report may not help us to pinpoint how the Korean exhibition sector responded in the wake of its greatest ever global success – *Parasite's* stunning triumph at the Academy Awards – it demonstrates the resilience and resourcefulness of the country's industry, one of the few in the world

which was not forced to completely shut down in the face of one of the greatest calamities to face the human race in modern times.

For the period from January 1 until September 18 (the time of this writing), the Korean box office sold 48.24 million tickets. This represented a steep 70% decline from last year's figure, 165.91 million. The drop, which is far less significant than what other markets in the world have experienced in 2020, can be attributed to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the local market. Viewers have largely been shunning theaters and other crowded venues, and as a response to that, local distributors have been wary of launching their pricey titles, while Hollywood has been

Top 10 Films of 2020

OVERALL FILMS

	Title	Admissions	Country
1	The Man Standing Next	4,750,208	Korea
2	Deliver Us From Evil	4,347,004	Korea
3	Peninsula	3,810,768	Korea
4	Hitman: Agent Jun	2,406,232	Korea
5	Ashfall	1,962,167	Korea
6	#Alive	1,903,703	Korea
7	Steel Rain 2: Summit	1,781,789	Korea
8	Dolittle	1,607,082	USA
9	Honest Candidate	1,536,732	Korea
10	Tenet	1,414,193	USA



KOREAN FILMS

	Title	Admissions
1	The Man Standing Next	4,750,208
2	Deliver Us From Evil	4,347,004
3	Peninsula	3,810,768
4	Hitman: Agent Jun	2,406,232
5	Ashfall	1,962,167
6	#Alive	1,903,703
7	Steel Rain 2: Summit	1,781,789
8	Honest Candidate	1,536,732
9	The Closet	1,270,835
10	OK! Madam	1,225,690

absent for most of the year.

On that note, the lack of American products has clearly affected the exhibition sector's market share. After achieving a strong 52.2% share during this period last year, local films accounted for a gigantic 67.4% of sales in 2020. Needless to say, given the overall depression, admissions to Korean films were still down, with 32.53 million tickets sold, versus 86.62 million in 2019. Consequently, the yearly drop for domestic titles, which was 63%, was less pronounced than it was for the overall market. Foreign films received 15.71 million visitors, a significant fall from 2019's 79.29 million. Generally driven by Hollywood fare, which has largely been absent throughout the year, the foreign film market has suffered greatly in 2020, down 81% year-on-year.

Saved big guns

Looking at the list of top-performing films we encounter similar issues. At

this point last year, a record four films had crossed the vaunted ten million viewer mark. Conversely, at this point in 2020, none has managed to cross even five million. The year's biggest hit to date, the Lunar New Year smash *The Man Standing Next*, which played in theaters prior to the crisis, would have landed at ninth on last year's chart with its 4.75 million admissions haul. Coming in behind that with 4.34 million viewers is *Deliver Us From Evil*, the biggest hit we've seen in the COVID-19 Era to date.

Five titles in the top ten were released prior to the point when Covid-19 was clearly beginning to erode grosses, although one of those (*Honest Candidate* at number nine) saw its release overlap with the downturn and probably could have welcomed more than the 1.54 million spectators it ultimately recorded. Given the lack of major Hollywood fare, even before the virus struck, it's little surprise

that eight of the top ten titles were homegrown and the lone overseas titles that have snuck in, *Dolittle* and *Tenet*, only managed to do so at numbers eight and ten.

Another major change was the breakdown of the hits by distributor. Walt Disney had a hand in five of the titles from last year's chart, while CJ ENM held three spots in the top five alone, but in 2020 Walt Disney's highest charting title was *Onward* at number 27. Among local distributors, CJ ENM was less dominant than usual, with just two titles in the top ten, *Deliver Us From Evil* and *Ashfall*, a holdover from 2019. Though no domestic distribution company has had a strong year, there's been a healthy mix of companies in the charts, as bigger conglomerates like CJ have presented less competitive titles as they save their big guns for when the market starts to recover. Showbox claimed the top spot, Lotte Cultureworks took three spots in the top seven and Next Entertainment



Peninsula



Steel Rain 2: Summit

World slotted into third and ninth place.

Promising year faces the unexpected

Before the public health scare became global news, it was business as usual in the Korean market. The year got off to a good start, much in the same way as previous years had, with a holdover from the prior year's end-of-year box office season leading the charts. In 2020, that film was the big-budget disaster action spectacular *Ashfall*, a hit two-header between superstars LEE Byung-hun and HA Jung-woo, which ultimately powered its way to 8.25 million viewers. 1.96 million of those were recorded in early 2020. With the Lunar New Year holiday falling in late January this year, the turnstiles barely slowed down before local distributors launched their contenders for the holiday crowds. High-concept comedy *Secret Zoo* was first up, topping the charts during its debut, with family comedy *Mr. Zoo: The Missing VIP*, action-comedy *Hitman: Agent Jun* and the political drama *The Man Standing Next*, once again featuring LEE Byung-hun, all bowing

the next week. When all was said and done, LEE Byung-hun triumphed again, as did KWON Sang-woo, who led *Hitman: Agent Jun*, which is currently the number four film of the year with 2.41 million viewers.

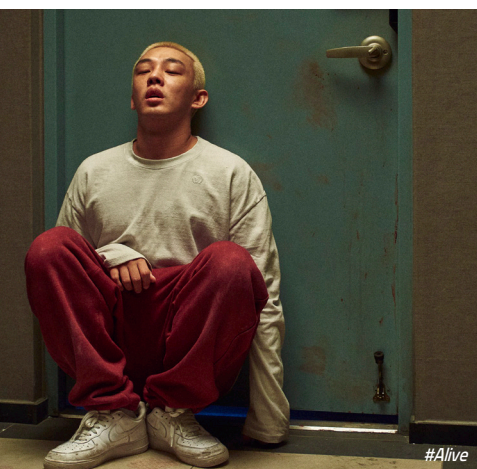
February welcomed a number of mid-level local titles, including the HA Jung-woo horror vehicle *The Closet*, the election comedy *Honest Candidate* and the star-driven noir thriller *Beasts Clawing at Straws*. Only *Honest Candidate* scored, though as noted earlier, its run was ultimately affected by the public health crisis.

Beasts Clawing at Straws, which was originally meant to open on February 12, debuted two days after the super-spreader event that originated in Korea on February 17 with the so-called 'Patient 31'.

As *Beasts Clawing at Straws* struggled, other companies balked and a domino effect quickly ensued whereby upcoming films were successively pulled from the lineup, including *Time to Hunt*, which cancelled its released shortly before its February 26 launch and eventually pivoted to Netflix, and several thrillers like *Intruder*, *Innocence* and *Call*, which

were initially scheduled to open in March. In very short order, Hollywood followed as global releases were delayed, including *A Quiet Place Part II*, *Mulan*, *Black Widow*, *No Time to Die* and *The Fate of the Furious*. This led to the Blumhouse-Universal horror update *The Invisible Man* having the market to itself from its opening in late February and through most of March. The film claimed the top spot on the charts for four consecutive weeks, an unheard feat for a horror film. However, its final gross was a mere 575,000 admissions. Covid had struck and left the industry on life support.

Admissions dropped week after week and as the pandemic grew more serious around the world and started to affect global economies, the film industry found itself in dire straits. Cinemas remained open, but several smaller venues temporarily ceased operations while CGV Cinemas closed 30% of its multiplexes. The venues that were still open enforced social distancing and contactless service, but crowds remained almost non-existent. From late March until the end of May, the top spots on the weekend



charts were claimed by music biopic *Judy*, Hong Kong martial arts action-drama *Ip Man 4: The Finale*, World War I drama *1917*, the 2016 Hollywood musical *La La Land* (which stayed at number one for two weeks), the animated film *Trolls World Tour* (the lone major new Hollywood release of the spring), Woody ALLEN's *A Rainy Day in New York*, the action-thriller *Escape from Pretoria*, the 2017 Hollywood musical *The Greatest Showman* and the creature feature *Underwater*. The box office hit several lows during this period, recording the smallest grosses since the Korean Film Council began to take records in 2004, but things eventually turned around. Case numbers dropped as the Korean government successfully went about containing clusters through an aggressive combination of social distancing and contact tracing, and as a result, consumer confidence gradually returned. By the beginning of summer, distributors were ready to take a chance again on the box office.

Adaptable and resilient

The first major local film to brave

the release calendar was Acemaker Movieworks' mystery-thriller *Intruder* in the first week of May. Ultimately the film attracted just 532,000 viewers but this was a marked improvement over what had transpired in the marketplace in the previous months. The rest of the release calendar for June and July quickly filled up and the totals for each new film kept rising. *Innocence*, the first locally produced and distributed film by Sony Pictures in Korea, stayed on top of the charts for two weeks, and finished its run just shy of 900,000 entries. The next chart topper was the zombie action-drama *#Alive* with YOO Ah-in from Lotte Cultureworks and hit production company Zip Cinema, which benefitted from a savvy marketing campaign and surprising parallels with life during quarantine, ultimately finding its way to 1.9 million spectators as it topped the charts during three consecutive weekends.

Mid-July to mid-August is generally peak season at the Korean box office and 2020 was no exception. Some major titles abandoned their summer plans, like the space drama *Space Sweepers*, but Next Entertainment World's *Train to Busan* (2016) sequel *Peninsula* held firm and scored first place finishes twice in a row, on its way to a respectable 3.81 million admissions. Two weeks later, the geopolitical thriller *Steel Rain 2: Summit* with JUNG Woo-sung and KWAK Do-won rose to first place and brought in decent crowds, winding up its run with 1.78 million viewers. At the start of August, CJ ENM showed its mettle for the first time during the COVID-19 era with its hit action-thriller *Deliver Us From Evil*, starring HWANG Jung-min and LEE Jung-jae, which ruled

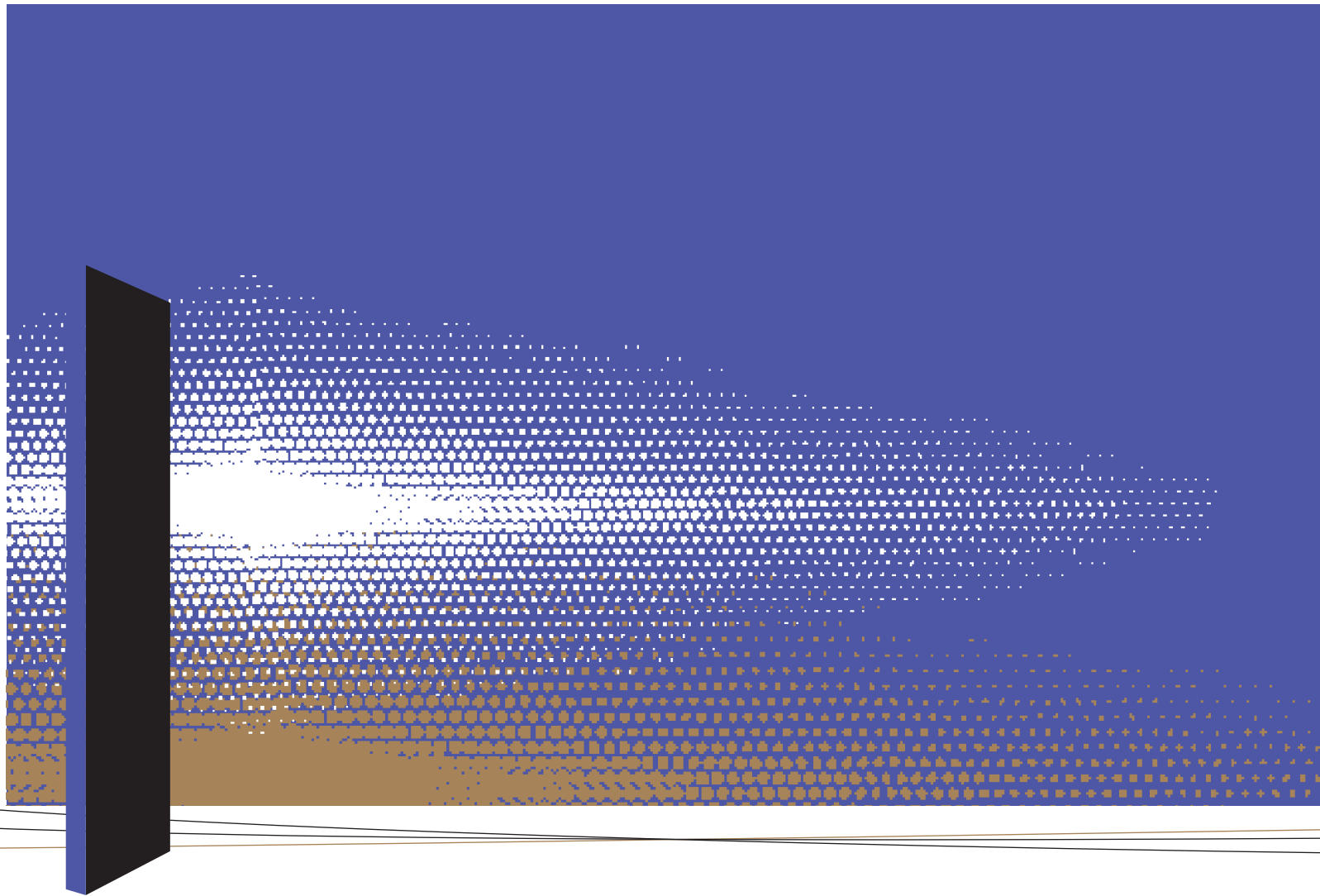
the charts for three weeks as it sold 4.35 million tickets.

A number of comedies were scheduled to follow in mid-to-late August, starting with *OK! Madam*, which reached 1.22 million admissions, but a new surge in local Covid-19 cases resulted in another round of delays, with *The Golden Holiday* the first to move off its August date (it was eventually rescheduled for late September). Amid this depressed market, Hollywood finally returned with the hotly anticipated new Christopher NOLAN film *Tenet*. Though the film has been well received and drawn solid crowds to specialty format screenings like IMAX, it was destined to a similar fate as *The Invisible Man*, ruling the roost for three weeks in a quiet marketplace. The Warner Bros title has to date recorded 1.41 million entries.

Following the slowdown of Korea's second major COVID-19 spike, things are starting to look better again and distributors have filled up the Chuseok holiday lineup with a mix of titles, including the previously mentioned action-comedy *The Golden Holiday*, the period action film *The Swordsman*, the female-led mystery-thriller *Diva*, the family comedy *Pawn*, the horror-comedy *Night of the Undead* and the BTS concert film *Break The Silence: The Movie*.

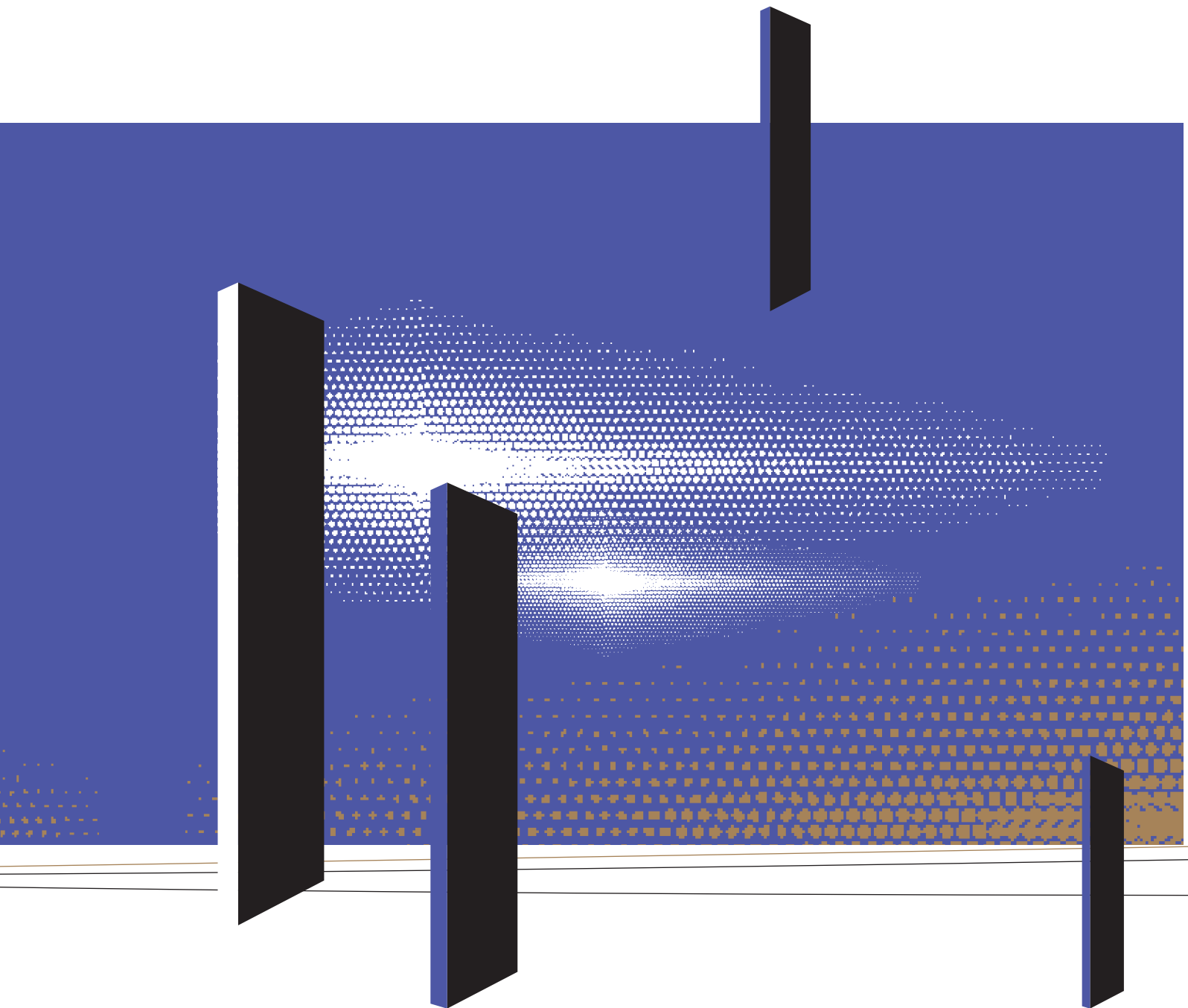
The road to recovery will yet be a long one but even in the face of this year's exceptional calamity, the Korean industry has shown how adaptable and resilient it can be. No doubt we may have to wait a little longer than usual for the next ten million viewer smash, but the lights at Korean multiplexes remain on, ready to light the path to the industry's recovery. 📽

by Pierce Conran



The Strong Determination of the 25th BIFF

F **r the Best** **Possible Decision**



In 2020, the Busan International Film Festival is bearing the weight of the crisis. While international film festivals in every country have been fumbling in the dark amid the global disaster that has been gripping the world since the start of this year, Busan was also striving to find the best compromise. In spite of a series of unprecedented situations it was confronted over the past 25 years during which it has played a pivotal role for Asian cinema, the festival has carefully stayed the course on what it needs to focus on to remain true to the very definition of a film festival. This special feature takes a look at the changes operated by BIFF this year, as well as ten Korean films recommended by Programmer JUNG Han-seok.

By KIM Hye-seon(Film Journalist)



Dreaming of the Future Amidst a Crisis

The Changes at BIFF, the Hub of Asia

One's true worth is proven in a crisis. When you remove from your list the things you have no choice but to discard for practical reasons one by one, you ultimately end up with what you consider the most important. The 25th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) was not afraid to take some drastic decisions so as to brave this unprecedented pandemic. The festival decided to postpone its opening day, initially scheduled for October 7 by two weeks, to dispel concerns over the spread of COVID-19. In a situation where people are having limited access to movies, BIFF has been betting everything on in-person screenings. This decision is BIFF's answer to the questions, "What is a cinema in the time of a pandemic, and what is the meaning of a film festival?" BIFF, which is running from October 21 to 30, has been prepared with priority given to preserving opportunities for the public to discover movies in theaters. Navigating through the storm with limited resources and a fast-changing situation, BIFF has set its course, which could be summarized as "back to the basic of cinema," i.e. for films to find their audience.

Never give up the theatrical experience

This year, BIFF canceled all outdoor events,

including both the opening and closing ceremonies, red carpets and panels, to focus only on film screenings. There will be no international guests, receptions, nor parties. Other events such as the Asian Contents & Film Market the Asia Project Market and the Forum BIFF will be held online to the maximum extent possible. But the one thing BIFF will never give up is the theater screening experience. As such, listening to those who voiced their concerns about COVID-19, the festival is giving itself until October 15, after the Chuseok holidays, to evaluate the situation. "We may even cancel the festival after discussing with the central government and Busan city in case the level 2 of social distancing is maintained or resumed," says LEE Yong-kwan, BIFF's chairman. LEE emphasized that "online screening isn't an option" even in the worst-case scenario of having to cancel the festival. It should come as no surprise that this situation does not make it easy to arrange offline screenings. First of all, having limited the number of screens to five, BIFF decided to drastically reduce the scope of its selection to 192 films from 68 countries. This year, each film is allowed to be screened only once, as opposed to normal years when 300 films would each be screened 2-3 times, and reservations are only offered online and through the mobile application. There are no specific badges issued for the press and industry professionals, in order to allow for as many people as possible to attend the screenings. "In accordance with the level 2 of social distancing measures, up to 50 seats for indoor screenings and 100 seats for outdoor screenings will be open for booking, regardless of the size of the theater", says NAM Dong-chul, program director of BIFF. "This also applies to our outdoor theater,

which has a capacity of 6,000.” He adds that the number of spectators the festival can welcome this time will be close to 10,000, “even if all the screenings are sold out”.

Although it will be of a seriously reduced scale compared to any normal year when it would draw between 200,000-300,000 viewers, BIFF made decisions that are never easy to take. While many film festivals including Cannes offered contact-free alternatives through online platforms, BIFF never gave up on cinemas, even if it had to downsize the scope of the festival under the strict measures of disease prevention. Although there will be fewer screenings, you only need to look at this year’s lineup to understand why BIFF is committed to theatrical screenings. 23 out of the 56 films officially selected for Cannes, which was canceled due to the pandemic, will be screened in Busan. Among them are *Ammonite* starring Kate WINSLET and Saoirse RONAN; *Falling*, Viggo MORTENSEN’s directorial debut; and the restoration of *In the Mood for Love* by WONG Kar Wai. Other anticipated films include *There is No Evil*, the winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival earlier this year, and *The Fight*, the winner of the Special Jury Award at Sundance.

Filmmaking never stops

This year, the return of master filmmakers is a particular stand out. The opening film, *Septet: The Story of Hong Kong*, is an omnibus film through which seven renowned directors from Hong Kong, including Ann HUI, Patrick TAM and Hark TSUI, present an endearing tribute to the city of Hong Kong, spanning decades from the 1950s to the near future. Other films from Asian prodigies include TSAI Ming-Liang’s *Days*, which was invited to compete at the Berlin International Film Festival

and Majid MAJIDI’s *Sun Children*, which was invited to compete at the Venice International Film Festival. There is also a slate of films by master directors from North America and Europe that are sure to catch the eye, such as Christian PETZOLD’s *Undine*, which won the Silver Bear for Best Actress at the Berlin International Film Festival, as well as Philippe GARREL’s *The Salt of Tears* and Kelly REICHARDT’s *First Cow*, which were both invited to the Berlin International Film Festival’s Competition section. You can also discover *Minamata Mandala*, the latest work from the godfather of Japanese documentaries HARA Kazuo and *City Hall* from the living legend of documentaries Frederick WISEMAN. It is safe to say that the level of excellence of this list makes up for the reduced number of screenings.

Another noteworthy trend is the remarkable achievement of Asian films, especially those coming from Japan. Many Japanese arthouse filmmakers are showcasing their latest works in Busan their latest works, such as *Josée, the Tiger and the Fish*, this year’s closing film which is an animation adaptation of the 2003 film, *True Mothers* by KAWASE Naomi and *Wife of a Spy* by KUROSAWA Kiyoshi, who won the Best Director Award at the Venice International Film Festival this summer. “This is because many Japanese directors released new works, but this is also a result of the festival’s effort to invite Asia’s representative filmmakers,” says Jay JEON, BIFF’s Festival Director. As if to prove that point, the up-and-coming Asian filmmakers from China, Vietnam, India and Tibet didn’t see their creative passions interrupted by the cancellations of international film festivals, and their diverse voices can be heard at this year’s BIFF. In the case of Korea, several directors whose debut features have drawn a lot of attention present their second feature films, such as KIM Ui-seok’s *Empty Body*, LEE Hwan’s *Young Adult Matters*, LEE Yu-bin’s *Our Joyful Summer Days*, LEE Chungyoul’s *Cicada*, YOON Sung-hyun’s *Time to Hunt* and more. Because the number of seats is extremely limited for each screening, securing a ticket will be difficult, but it will be crucial to look at what will come out of BIFF’s determination to stick closer to the basics of cinema as the situation gets worse. BIFF’s success or lack thereof this year will not be a matter of concern for the festival alone but will have significant implications for the future of cinema and film festivals around the world. 📌

by SONG Gyung-won(Cine21 Reporter)



Keeping the Weight of Emotions and the Depth of Years

Korean Films at BIFF 2020 Programmer's Recommendations

Though BIFF 2020 has been scaled down, it is filled with notable films. This year's trends in Korean cinema are summarized in two ways. First, just as in 2019, female directors remain strong and are looking more stable. Second, talented rookies and young directors are back with their latest films. These directors have returned with their second features after introducing their debut features at BIFF. JUNG Han-seok, Korean Cinema Programmer, recommends ten films.

by SONG Gyung-won(Cine21 Reporter)



Empty Body

KIM Ui-seok | Korean Cinema Today_Panorama

Hye-ra (MOON So-ri) falls into despair after the loss of her son Young-in (JANG Yoo-sang) in a suspicious car accident. Fortunately, a part of her son's brain is connected with AI and is successfully restored. However, she feels distant from her son because he behaves a bit differently. As her suspicion gets serious, she comes to conclude that the AI removed her son's soul and began to act like him. The film is the extended version of an episode from *SF8*, a cinematic TV series. The director added 40 minutes to the original 50-min episode. However, the additions have changed the entire atmosphere, perspective and approach toward the subject. The director displays his brilliant sensitivity for revealing deep emotions, which he already showed in his debut feature, *After My Death* (2018). Don't be misguided by questions like whether it is AI or what makes a *human*. He meticulously maintains the tension throughout this intense film so that viewers may feel like touching these invisible emotions.



Snowball

LEE Woo-jung | New Currents

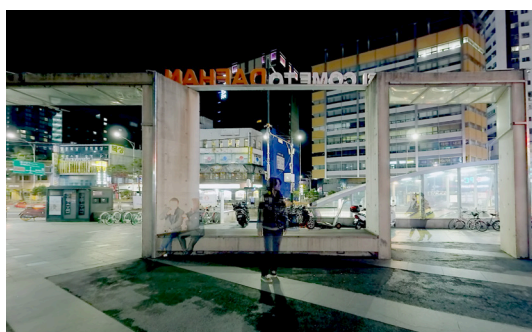
Growing pains sound encouraging. However, any pain over the limit may break a person before they get a chance to grow. Based on the original novel of the same title written by LIM Solah, this film is about the ruthless relationships between high-school girls. Their lives become more shattered as they struggle to do their best. Kang-I (BANG Min-ah), Aram (SHIM Dal-gi) and So-young (HAN Sung-min) are high school friends. The group runs away from home together. However, just as you quickly outgrow your clothes, their friendship also breaks down at some point. A crack gets wider within their company. In the small group, they create hierarchy and division, which leads to violence. The director depicts the girls' emotional devastation in a more elaborate and sentimental way. This is a strong debut feature by a director who is well-seasoned in short films.



A Leave

LEE Ran-hee | New Currents

What is your image for “home sweet home”? A two-story house with a garden or some relaxing moments? Those images suggested by media cause an illusion that they are recipes for happiness. Middle-aged, laid-off worker Jaebok lost a case against his dismissal. While devastated alongside fellow workers in cold winter, he suggests going on a vacation like everybody else. However, they are faced with harsh reality. He has to prepare for his eldest daughter's university deposit while his youngest daughter wants a bench parka. He ends up heading to a factory for some part-time work. As the director did in her short films such as *A Perm* (2009) and *A Night Before the Wedding* (2014), her camera focuses on social issues, and never loses any of the little moments in life. The calm, low voice sounds more aching and plaintive than any loud voice.



Beyond You

PARK Hong-min | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

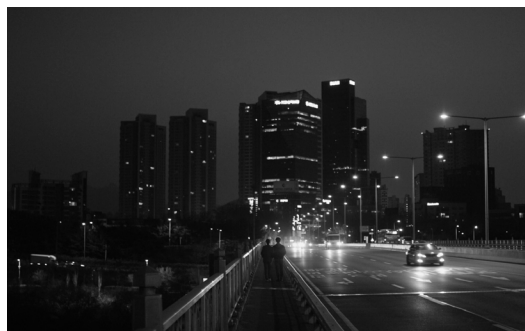
There is a man and a woman that look awkward. Ji-yeon (YOON Hye-ri) comes to visit Kyung-ho (KIM Kwon-hoo), a filmmaker. She bluntly talks about her mother, In-sook (OH Min-ae), who lives with Alzheimer's Disease. In-sook is his first love. The girl says she is his daughter. He strongly denies it, saying she made up the story in her wandering memory. This seemingly typical melodrama moves towards an unexpected direction through various events. At the halfway point of the film, the story becomes lost in a maze. The film discovers wrinkled times in the normal lives of two ordinary people and turns them into a dreamlike fantasy. Just as the director used the structures of dream and memory in his previous film *Alone* (2017), he creates his own structure within a conventional frame of genre. Like the ants at the beginning and end of the film, viewers can embark on an adventure in this vast, cinematic labyrinth.



Good Person

JUNG Wook | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

Sometimes, being a good person doesn't sound like a compliment but like a lame excuse to avoid responsibility. "Being good" doesn't articulate its purpose and subject. This dilemma is the main motif of this film. Gyungseok (KIM Tae-hoon) is a homeroom teacher known as a good person. One day, a theft takes place in his class, and Seik (LEE Hyo-je) is pegged as a suspect owing to the circumstances. The boy firmly insists on his innocence, but the teacher asks him to tell the truth. That night, the teacher brings his young daughter to school, and she goes missing. Seik again falls under suspicion. The director thoroughly depicts how small things return as a typhoon, like the butterfly effect. The film is well-tuned with the tension of the genre and the beauty of twist. Be prepared for the weighty question you will encounter at the end of the raging events.



Our Midnight

LIM Jung-eun | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

A man and a woman walk during a long night. This simple setting is enough to make a story. Each of these people who had a tough time meet by chance and talk to each other while walking. He is a poor actor. His long-time girlfriend abruptly broke up with him. With a wounded heart, he does his part-time patrol job for a living. The woman had a workplace relationship and fell victim to dating violence. She reported it to the police but ended up being a victim of superficial gossip. When she wanders disturbed along the Han River, she happens to meet him on a bridge and they walk together, having a chat. Two people are absorbed into the night in the city like a poem on a black and white screen. You may think it a casual drama, but it has meticulously-coordinated frames and thoughtful conversations. An endearing warmth slowly fills up in the desolate landscape.



Short Vacation

KWON Min-pyo, SEO Hansol | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

"Take a picture of the end of the world." A teacher in a student photography club assigns this odd summer vacation project. Four girls in the first year of the same middle school are preoccupied with the difficult task. Each one has her idea of the world's end. One girl suggests that they take subway line No.1 to Sinchang, its last station. The film is a bright, fresh piece like a summer holiday and also a serious parable that asks about the essence of life. The girls who go on a trip with portable film cameras look similar to our lives. They doze off or stop in a shower but never give up on their journey to the unknown world. Life is an adventure of expanding the boundary that surrounds your life. The girls' exciting adventure calmly rekindles our innermost sense of the old days we had forgotten by the weight of lives and the speed of years.



Our Joyful Summer Days

LEE Yu-bin | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

The film follows the story of a long-time couple who are bored with each other. Chan-hee (Ji-soo), who dreamed of becoming a photographer, makes a living as a camera salesperson. His girlfriend Se-young (LEE Ju-yeon) works at a nail shop and forgot her dreams long ago. Then, a man with a decent job and money starts to show an interest in her. She treats him nicely. Chan-hee anxiously suggests a trip to get his girlfriend back. However, the journey brings with it more problems than pleasure. Just as the director skillfully described delicate feelings in her previous film, *Shuttlecock* (2014), she once again shows her brilliant talents. In the course of the couple's constant arguing and reconciling or disliking and loving each other, they remove all the dirt of boredom and restore their passion. This is a sensitive film filled with complicated and subtle layers of feelings in each scene.



Young Adult Matters

LEE Hwan | Korean Cinema Today_Vision

More aggressive, stronger and wilder. LEE's debut feature, *Park Hwa-Young* (2018) rubbed our hearts like rough sandpaper, demanding awareness of a problem. His second feature pushes this uncomfortable unease to the limit. Se-jin (LEE Yoo-mi) is a vulnerable pregnant teenager. The stray girl meets another wandering girl (AHN Hee-yeon) and they become friends. They meet two guys, Jae-pil (LEE Hwan) and Shin-ji (HAN Sung-soo). The four youths are likely to look for a place to stay. However, after a short, sweet period, the group falls into challenging situations and becomes addicted to a harassing, exploitative and sadistic relationship. It's explicit violence and callous disregard may make you feel uncomfortable. This controversial and provocative film raises questions by revealing the young people's plight, not by applying the standards of right and wrong.



Self-portrait 2020

LEE Dongwoo | Wide Angle_Korean Competition

"I dedicate this to Robert BRESSON who taught me the real meaning of salvation." *Self-portrait 2000* (2000), which was invited to Venice International Film Festival and Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, begins with admiration and affection for cinema. *Self-portrait 2020* is a documentary on director LEE Sang-yeol, who directed *Self-Portrait 2000*. Director LEE Dongwoo happens to know director LEE Sang-yeol, a homeless man in Tapgol Park, Seoul. He is often in custody and doesn't seem to have any plan. However, he shows extraordinary insights when he talks about the films of Robert BRESSON and OZU Yasujiro. The dialogue between a poor director and a senior director doesn't have any purpose or destination. Their 160-minute conversation seems to search for the truth of "What is cinema?" Beyond their 20-year age gap, two films, two directors and two lives consolingly embrace each other in the ending credits.

Who Will Win the Streaming War?

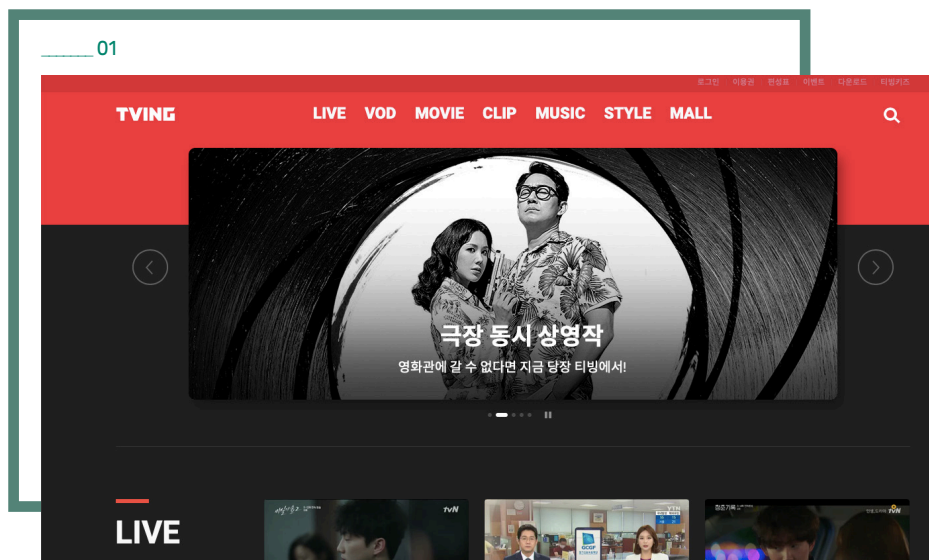
Streaming Services Go Head-to-Head in the COVID-19 Era

Nothing is more telling about the current state of the media industry than the half-joking grumblings that Netflix has been the greatest beneficiary of the Covid-19 pandemic. While theater ticket sales fell 70.3 percent during the first half of 2020, compared to the previous year, Netflix reported that it gained a record high 15.77 million new subscribers world-wide during the first quarter of 2020. While Netflix might be at the head of the pack, it is now facing credible challenges from many other over-the-top (OTT) video streaming services. With demand surging, Netflix is slowly losing ground as the industry's front runner. In the North American market, streaming services including Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, WarnerMedia's HBO Max, NBCUniversal's Peacock and Apple TV have likewise reaped the rewards of world-wide quarantine binge-watching. The same is true in Korea where most households subscribe to multiple streaming services, namely Netflix, Wavve, Tving, Watcha and Amazon Prime. There is relatively little content overlap between these platforms, so, just as audiences once flipped through TV channels, today's smart TV viewers are moving back and forth between different apps as they decide on what they want to watch.

A Big Step Forward for Korean OTTs

In Korea, local OTT service providers are establishing themselves as players in this industry and challenging Netflix for control over the domestic market. With the Korean movie industry in a slump, the Jeonju International Film Festival and Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival partnered with the Korean OTT companies Wavve and Watcha, respectively, to

host both online and offline screenings. According to Nielsen Koreanclick, in May, Netflix boasted 7.36 million monthly active users, while Wavve and Tving recorded a respectable 3.94 million and 3.95 million users, respectively. Wavve and Seezn have attracted large numbers of early subscribers and raised brand awareness thanks to the backing of telecom giants SK Telecom and KT. SK Telecom is offering its customers free access to Wavve if they sign up for a special payment plan and the company is also providing a data service that can be used exclusively for streaming Wavve content. Although they don't have access to the same resources as Netflix, these domestic streaming services have thrown their hats into the ring and begun producing their own original content. Recently, Wavve announced plans to spend 60 billion



won on the production of eight original titles, including the Korean sci-fi anthology series *SF 8*, which is made up of eight episodes each directed by a different film director, and the entertainment drama *Zombie Detective*. These titles were first streamed online before being aired on TV. Watcha is also considering a similar move. Watcha is an on-demand media streaming service created by engineers from Seoul National University, Pohang University of Science & Technology and Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST). The service boasts recommendation technology that makes use of both machine learning (technology that applies human learning patterns to AI) and deep learning (technology used to group together and categorize objects and data). This model is different from Netflix's recommendation engine, which divides users into one of thousands of recommendation clusters based on the user's viewing preferences. Watcha, on the other hand, asks its members to give ratings on movies that

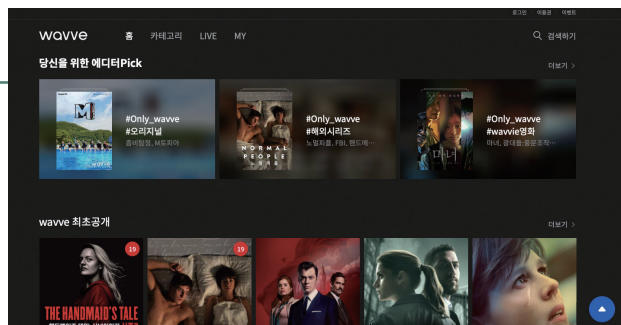
they have watched. A total of ten to thirty ratings is all the service needs to offer a list of recommendations tailored to each user's appetite.

CJ ENM and JTBC signed a business agreement and announced plans to join hands in launching their own joint OTT service (editor's note: industry insiders expect it to be similar to but a more advanced version of Tving). This move has garnered substantial attention as it means that their subsidiaries, Studio Dragon and JTBC Studios, will be working together to produce quality content.

The Race for Original Content

The approach Korean OTTs have taken to obtaining content differs from Netflix, which licenses content at a fixed rate. In other words, the price it pays does not fluctuate based on the revenue the movie or show generates. The streaming giant has taken this approach because it operates in over 190 countries world-wide, making purchasing streaming rights for a fixed price the best option. On the other hand, Korean OTTs typically sign revenue-share contracts because their market is limited to Korea. This is the reason behind why it often feels like Watcha has a more extensive library of films than Netflix. Of course, there are exceptions. For instance, Watcha had to pay a heftier price for recent NBCU titles such as *Chernobyl*, *Killing Eve*, *Years and Years*, and *Mrs. America*. Wavve also had to pay extra in order to gain the rights to stream the latest episodes of NBCU's newest shows on a weekly basis. How these streaming services acquire license rights may change as they grow, but the breadth and depth of their collections will play a deciding role in determining the winner of the on-going streaming war.

Meanwhile, competition over short-form video content is also fierce, with YouTube dominating the field. Short-form content allows its viewers to arrive at decisions faster and content creators have more freedom in terms of choosing their subject material. Plus, there is the added benefit that YouTube has fewer restrictions than traditional media. Wavve and Watcha have not yet attempted to enter this market. Short-form content, such as *King of Negotiation*, in which the main host HWANG Kwang-hee voices his dissatisfaction with products to companies on behalf of disgruntled customers, and the



02



03

- 01 Tving provided by CJ ENM
- 02 Wavve partnering with Jeonju
- 03 Watcha signed an agreement with Bucheon

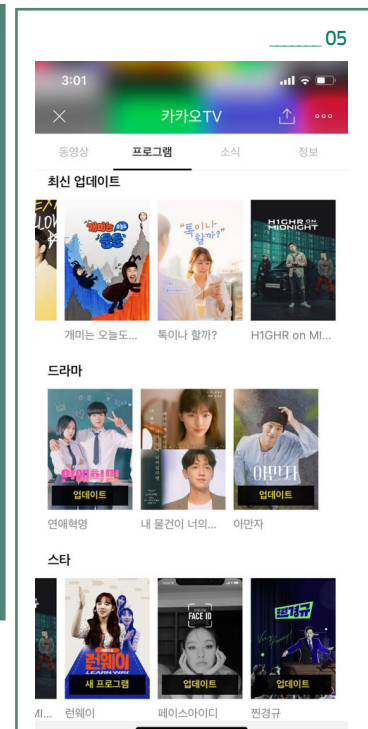
YouTube channel MMTG, which has gained popularity by introducing viewers to underground youth culture, have demonstrated that they too hold great value despite the fact that they are much shorter than traditional entertainment shows, which take up a full hour. KakaoTV and Naver TV have been producing their own original short-form content. Naver's subsidiary Playlist typically releases its content on YouTube, but some content is either first released on Naver TV or reserved for paying customers to view on V Live. KakaoTV, which was launched on September 1st, introduced various entertainment shows (*KakaoTV Morning – The Three Ants* and *ZZIN Kyung Kyu*) that were produced by big name producers who jumped ship from MBC and JTBC. *Love Revolution*, which was produced by investment distribution company Merry Christmas, has gained immense popularity amongst teenagers. Despite not being available on YouTube, the content has recorded over one million views. This early success has helped KakaoTV to quickly find its footing in this emerging market. The platform has taken various measures to attract the attention of viewers and urge them to click on its videos. For instance, the service highlights the view count on all of its titles, and the recommendation algorithm offers users customized content. This approach spurs content production and is a prime example of how online streaming services differ from legacy media. If KakaoM, which has pledged to invest 300 billion won in producing 15 original titles each year until 2023, is able to continue churning out content, it might be able to create a foundation on which short-form content can survive without relying on the global platform Youtube. The title “killer content” is no longer reserved for feature length films, dramas and entertainment shows.

Using Netflix as a Springboard

Korean OTTs are still reliant on Netflix when it comes to producing content that they would ideally like to own the exclusive rights to. Wavve has joined forces with the three terrestrial broadcasters (KBS, MBC, SBS), but their dramas and entertainment shows are still available on Netflix. TvN also recently signed an agreement with Netflix to simulcast *Hospital Playlist*, *Stranger*



04



05

TOP Movies on Netflix in the World on September 9			
1.	Love, Guaranteed	585	
2.	#Alive	545	
3.	A Million Ways to Die in the West	190	
4.	Fifty Shades Freed	168	
5.	Freaks – You're One of Us	159	

06

- 04 SF8 participated by Korean directors and served on Wavve
- 05 Contents served by KakaoTV
- 06 Netflix top movies chart

and *Record of Youth*, shows which are eagerly gobbled up by Netflix subscribers. Korea's three terrestrial broadcasters, as well as CJ ENM and JTBC, have opted against releasing their content exclusively on their own OTT platforms, choosing rather to sell their licenses to Netflix, in order to cover the huge production costs. In recent years, TV advertisement revenue has shrunk, and production costs have risen, particularly since laws were passed requiring companies to limit employee regular working hours to forty hours per week. This has made it difficult to turn a profit by airing shows on Korean TV alone. Also, viewer expectations are much higher, and it is becoming the industry norm for TV series to be shot like movies, which means they require blockbuster-size budgets. Working with Netflix, which is funded by close to 200 million monthly subscribers world-wide, means that Korean content producers can afford the cost and reach international audiences at the same time. Not only does this lower the risk, but it also saves them the cost of subtitling and marketing, which are critical for global distribution. In their agreement with Wavve, KBS, SBS and MBC included a clause that specifies that they may supply up to two titles to global video platforms per year, which means they can sell their titles to Netflix. It is along these lines that CJ ENM and JTBC Studio likewise signed an agreement with Netflix to produce 20 titles for the platform over the next three years. However, if they can identify other sources of income, domestic OTTs will be able to stream their contents exclusively on their own platforms. *Crash Landing on You* and *Itaewon Class* made it to Netflix's Top 10 List, a clear indication that if Korean OTTs find a way to distribute their content to viewers around the world, they may be able to stream their content on their own platforms without relying on the likes of Netflix.

Overcoming Clashes Over Payment

There are a number of obstacles that Korean OTT platforms must overcome in order to up their competitive edge. Recently, domestic OTTs such as Wavve and Watcha have been clashing with the Association of Korean Buyers & Distributors of Foreign Films (KBDF). The KBDF issued a strongly worded statement that it will halt the streaming of its foreign films on local OTT

platforms. The KBDF claims that the current method of royalty payment in local streaming platforms is unfair as distribution companies receive only 100 won per film. The group argues that calculating payment based on the percentage of viewers a title attracts out of the total number of platform users is unfavorable for independent arthouse films but favorable to TV series. Watcha issued its own statement in which it maintains that it has respected "fair and transparent accounting" according to its contracts with ancillary rights holders, and took issue with being asked by the association to basically establish pay-per-view (PPV) services and "abandon the OTT model and provide services that are the same as IPTV." It added that the company is willing to discuss the issue with the representatives of member companies at any time and place. Last July, Korean OTTs were also confronted by the Korea Music Copyright Association (KOMCA) over music copyright. KOMCA is demanding that copyright payment for music that is played in films streamed by domestic OTTs be increased to match the international standard set by Netflix. Streaming services will need to approach these and other issues that have emerged as the industry is still in its early stages: what position they will take on these issues and will they be as rigid with copyright fees as Netflix. Otherwise, the OTT industry may lose steam before building any momentum.

Although there are a number of variables, the future of domestic OTTs is bright. In 2019, the average North American household subscribed to 4.5 streaming services. Koreans, whose love for quality content is second to none, will most likely also subscribe to multiple platforms. Most of the Daily Top 10 titles Netflix has been announcing since February 25 have been Korean, most of which can be viewed on Korean OTTs. In other words, Korean OTTs will likely not fall victim to the advance of foreign streaming services into the Korean market. The end game of the current streaming war will be that companies able to secure their own competitive niche will find a way to coexist. The landscape of the global streaming services is rapidly changing, and the war that will decide which streaming service survives has already begun. 📢

by IM Soo-yeon(CINE21 Reporter)

22

COLORS OF KOREAN FILMS

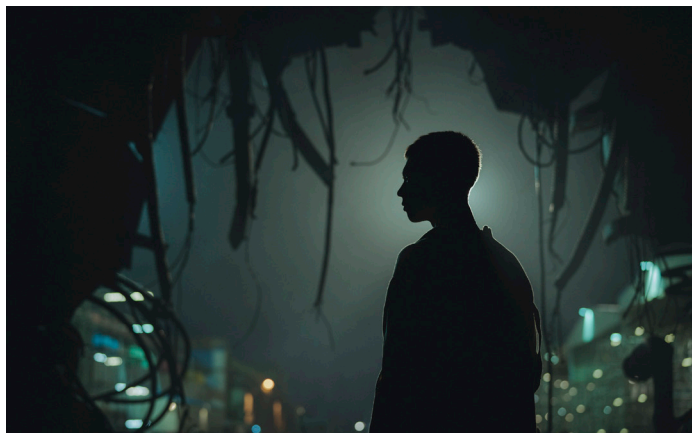
- ▶ CJ Entertainment
- ▶ Cinema Dal
- ▶ Contents Panda
- ▶ Finecut

- ▶ Indiestory
- ▶ K-Movie Entertainment
- ▶ Little Big Pictures
- ▶ Lotte Entertainment

- ▶ Mirovision/Studio Bonanza
- ▶ M-Line Distribution
- ▶ Showbox



CJ Entertainment



SEOBOK (Working Title)

2020 | TBA | Drama, Action

DIRECTOR LEE Yong-zoo

CAST GONG Yoo, PARK Bo Gum

RELEASE DATE TBA **CONTACT** CJ Entertainment

TEL +82 2 371 9297 **FAX** +82 2 371 6346 **EMAIL** filmsales@cj.net

Following a traumatic incident, top secret agent Ki-hun (GONG Yoo) has been living a secluded life, but he's brought back into the fold by his former boss at the National Intelligence Agency for a special mission – he must transport the world's first human clone, Seobok (PARK Bo Gum), to a secure location. Ki-hun embarks on this journey with Seobok, who represents both a hope for and a great threat to humanity. As varying factions close in on them, Ki-hun must make some difficult decisions that may have vast consequences.

SEOBOK is the long-awaited comeback of director LEE Yong-zoo, who debuted with the acclaimed K-horror *Possessed* (2009) and went on to make the nostalgic romance *Architecture 101* (2012), one of the most successful melodramas of all time. Joining LEE for this high-concept sci-fi thriller is superstar GONG Yoo, known to audiences the world over for his leading role in YEON Sang-ho's *Train to Busan* (2016), as well as acclaimed hits such as KIM Jee-woon's *The Age of Shadows* (2016) and his extensive TV work, and PARK Bo Gum, the fresh-faced star who has amassed an enormous fanbase through his TV work and graduates now to a leading film role after *Roaring Currents* (2014) and *Coin Locker Girl* (2015).

by Pierce Conran

PAWN

2020 | 113 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR KANG Dae-kyu

CAST SUNG Dong Il, HA Ji Won, KIM Hiewon, PARK Soi

RELEASE DATE September 29, 2020 **CONTACT** CJ Entertainment

TEL +82 2 371 9297 **FAX** +82 2 371 6346 **EMAIL** filmsales@cj.net

In Incheon in the early 1990s, a pair of debt collectors, Du-seok (SUNG Dong Il) and Jong-bae (KIM Hiewon), visit the illegal immigrant Myung-ja (KIM Yun-jin) to collect. However, as Myung-ja is unable to pay, she offers up her own nine-year-old daughter Seung-yi (PARK Soi) instead as collateral. As they hold on to this guarantee, who they begin to call 'Pawn', an unexpected bond begins to form between them all, and after Myung-ja is suddenly deported from South Korea, Du-seok becomes Seung-yi's guardian. In present day, Myung-ja has grown into a woman (HA Ji Won)

Pawn sees production company JK Film return to cinemas two years after the thriller *The Negotiation* (2018), with SON Ye-jin and HYUN Bin. The company, run by JK YOUN, is known for *The Himalayas* (2015), *Confidential Assignment* (2017) and *Keys to the Heart* (2018) as well as YOUN's own directorial efforts *Haeundae* (2009) and *Ode to My Father* (2014). YOUN serves here as both writer and producer, while KANG Dae-gyu (*Harmony*, 2010) wields the megaphone again, following his work on several scripts for previous JK Film titles. The film also marks the return to the Korean industry of star HA Ji Won, following her international film debut in John WOO's *Manhunt*. HA previously headlined the JK Film monster feature *Sector 7* (2011).

by Pierce Conran





LIMECRIME

2020 | 81 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR LEE Seunghwan, YOO Jaewook

CAST LEE Minwoo, JANG Yoosang, Oltii

RELEASE DATE TBA **CONTACT** Cinema Dal

TEL +82 2 337 2135 **FAX** +82 2 325 2137 **EMAIL** sales@cinemadal.com

Song-ju is a youth who lives with his family in a multi-generational village and whose main passion in life is hip-hop. The person in the hip-hop community he reveres above all others is the artist known as E-sense. His friend Joo-yeon, who unlike Song-ju lives in a high-rise apartment, is also a big fan of hip-hop and shares his dreams. So this pair of friends decide to team up to form the hip-hop band 'LIMECRIME'. Their dream is to be able to make it one day onto the stage of the famed Milim, a sanctuary within the hip-hop community. In order to chase this dream together, they decide to both attend the same high school and continue to rap together. However, little do they know that over time the differences in their environments will gradually push them onto different paths.

LIMECRIME marks the feature directing debut of co-directors LEE Seunghwan and YOO Jaewook and will have its world premiere as part of the Korean Cinema Today - Vision section at this year's Busan International Film Festival (BIFF). LEE and YOO previously collaborated on the short film *A Room of One's Own*, which earned a Jury Prize at the Mise-en-scene Short Film Festival (MSFF) in 2013, as well as the short *The Night Is Too Long* (2007), which LEE wrote and directed and YOO shot.

by Pierce Conran

SASANG: THE TOWN ON SAND

2020 | 129 Min | Documentary

DIRECTOR PARK Baeil

CAST PARK Sunghee, CHOI Suyoung

RELEASE DATE TBA **CONTACT** Cinema Dal

TEL +82 2 337 2135 **FAX** +82 2 325 2137 **EMAIL** sales@cinemadal.com

Sung-hee and Su-young are figures whose lives and bodies have been ceaselessly exploited in service of the 'capital', which has rendered their work and contributions, not to mention their very existences, invisible. These characters reside in Sasang, the so-called 'Town of Sand', which embraces them yet preserves the scars left by the claws of the 'capital'. Sasang has also been the hometown for PARK Baeil, the director of this non-fiction work, for the past 30 years, the last nine of which he's spent observing it. PARK is a veteran filmmaker who has been making non-fiction works for the past ten years, each exploring various injustices faced by characters oppressed by systems larger than themselves.

Sasang: The Town on Sand is the director's ninth feature film, and follows works such as *Soseongri*, which earned the Mecenat Award at the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in 2017, and *Miryang Arirang - Legend of Miryang 2*, which debuted in competition at the DMZ Docs International Documentary Film Festival in 2014 and earned the Grand Prize and Audience Jury Award from the Seoul Eco Film Festival. PARK's latest work will have its world premiere as part of the Documentary competition in the Wide Angle section of this year's BIFF. It is his fifth film to be invited to the festival.

by Pierce Conran



Contents Panda



THE CURSED LESSON

2020 | TBD | Horror

DIRECTOR KIM Ji-han, JUHN Jai-hong

CAST LEE Chae-young, JO Jung-min, CHOI Cheol-ho

RELEASE DATE Fall, 2020 **CONTACT** Contents Panda

TEL +82 2 3490 9372 **FAX** +82 2 6902 0286 **EMAIL** sales@its-new.co.kr

Hyo-jung (LEE Chae-young) is an online fashion model who is growing anxious of being replaced by a younger generation of fit models. After looking into various surgical procedures and treatments that could help her maintain her edge, she finds out from her old high school classmate Ga-young about a mysterious yoga class that could help her achieve the ideal body. She joins the class, which includes three other members - Mi-yeon, a boxer who's fallen out of shape, the mentally unstable Ji-won, and Ye-na, a movie star who is obsessed with her appearance. At the same time, the police are investigating a murder in the neighborhood which was committed by a woman named Bo-ra, a former student of the very same yoga class.

A remake of the 2009 K-horror film *Yoga*, *The Cursed Lesson* is the latest film from two directors KIM Ji-han and JUHN Jai-hong, purveyors of low-budget genre films. Playing the lead is LEE Chae-young, who has appeared in supporting roles in major commercial fare such as *Secretly Greatly* (2013). She last appeared in the Chinese project *Tik Tok*, alongside LEE Jung-jae, in 2016. Making her film debut as the murder suspect is singer and TV actress KAN Mi-yeon.

by Pierce Conran

THE LABYRINTH

2020 | TBD | Horror

DIRECTOR SONG Hyun-joo

CAST Chan-hee, PARK You-na

RELEASE DATE 2021 **CONTACT** Contents Panda

TEL +82 2 3490 9372 **FAX** +82 2 6902 0286 **EMAIL** sales@its-new.co.kr

Hee-min (Chan-hee) has just transferred to a new school and on his very first day, he falls head over heels for his fellow classmate So-young (PARK You-na). By chance, Hee-min comes across So-young's personal diary, so he decides to return it to her after stuffing it with some Valentine's Day candy. To do so, he must sneak back into school at night on the eve of Valentine's Day to return the diary to its proper place, but he quickly realizes that all isn't right with the school, as strange events begin to unfold. At the same time, So-young has also returned to the school in search of her diary, along with several other students. Now, this gang of high school students find themselves on the run from ghostly apparitions and together they must seek out a way out of their haunted school, but can they survive the night?

Based on the Korean survival-horror video game 'White Day: A Labyrinth Named School', *The Labyrinth* features young actors Chan-hee, a member of the K-pop group SF9, and PARK You-na in the leading roles, who both appeared in the smash hit TV show *Sky Castle*. The film marks the feature directing debut of SONG Hyun-joo, who previously worked as a script supervisor on the comedy *Like for Likes* (2016).

by Pierce Conran



Finecut



SNOWBALL

2020 | 110 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR LEE Woo-jung

CAST BANG Min-a, HAN Sung-min, SHIM Dal-gi

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** Finecut

TEL +82 2 569 8777 **FAX** +82 2 569 6662 **EMAIL** cineinfo@finecut.co.kr

Since her parents decide to register a fake address in a posh district just so she could be sent to a better school, 18-year old Kang-yi has always felt out of place. It is no surprise then that she sticks like a leech to the only two classmates who have ever accepted her as their friend, Ah-ram and So-young. However, So-young doesn't hesitate to discard her friends if it means getting closer to her dreams. As for Ah-ram, she seems to always care about trivial things more than she does about her friends. Feeling the need to run away from home, Kang-yi tags along with them, only to find herself struggling to keep her inner demons at bay and not turn into the worst version of herself.

LEE Woo-jung had already explored this life period in several short films, such as *See You Tomorrow* (2011), winner of the Sonje Award (for Best Korean Short) in Busan. Her debut feature tells a destructive coming-of-age story adapted from IM Solah's award-winning novel *The Best Life*. This title also marks the film debut of BANG Min-a, a member of K-pop outfit Girl's Day who has gained experience as well as recognition appearing in TV series.

by Fabien Schneider

SLATE

2020 | 99 Min | Action

DIRECTOR JO Ba-reun

CAST AHN Ji-hye, LEE Min-ji, PARK Tae-san

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** Finecut

TEL +82 2 569 8777 **FAX** +82 2 569 6662 **EMAIL** cineinfo@finecut.co.kr

When she was a child in an orphanage, Yeon-hee dreamed of being a heroine who would protect the weak with her sword. Twenty years later, she has managed to become the next best thing, an actor in action films, albeit not a highly successful one since she is often relegated to playing stunt doubles. Having just reluctantly agreed to such a role as she has bills to pay, she goes to the film set only to find it empty. She notices a strange-looking wooden slate, and the next thing she knows, she finds herself in a parallel dimension where everything is governed by the sword, with people being killed in the street without anyone batting an eye. Mistaken as the legendary Soul Slayer that a whole village believes would protect them from Taepyeongso and his Dragon Clan, Yeon-hee decides to play the part.

A modern Korean take on the wuxia genre, *Slate* sees AHN Ji-hye in her first lead role, after she was last seen in the indie *Our Body* (2018). In a meta twist, AHN is known in real life for performing all her action scenes herself, having already showed off her fencing skills in the 2006 period TV series *Six Flying Dragons*, and did the same in this film. Behind the camera is JO Ba-reun, who took home Best Short from the Korean competition of the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival in 2016 with *Vibration*.

by Fabien Schneider





A LEAVE

2020 | 81 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR LEE Ran-hee

CAST LEE Bong-ha, KIM Ah-seok, SHIN Woon-seop

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** Indiostory

TEL +82 2 722 6051 **FAX** +82 2 722 6055 **EMAIL** indiostory@indiostory.com

Jae-bok, a 49-year old worker who has been holding a sit-in with the union ever since he and his colleagues were dismissed five years ago, faces a massive setback when, after a tough legal battle, the Supreme Court rules that the layoffs will not be overturned. As they all agree to take some much-needed rest for themselves, Jae-bok comes back home and gets a part-time job at a furniture factory to pay for his daughter's college tuition, working for the first time since he started the protest. Just when his short break is about to end, his resolve is put to the test when his boss offers him a full-time position.

Director LEE Ran-hee was inspired by an encounter she had with one such fired worker who had been participating tirelessly to a sit-in. Baffled over learning that he took only three breaks during more than a decade of protests, she wondered how anyone could keep their spirits up and still attend these sit-ins after all this time, to which the man answered that he simply has to see it through to the end. This film marks the feature debut of LEE, who distinguished herself with the short *A Night Before the Wedding*, which won Best Picture at the Jeju Film Festival in 2015.

by Fabien Schneider

UNBOXING GIRL

2020 | 121 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR KIM Soo-jung

CAST LEE Tae-kyung, LEE Sang-hyun, LEE Bom

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** Indiostory

TEL +82 2 722 6051 **FAX** +82 2 722 6055 **EMAIL** indiostory@indiostory.com

Whereas Young-jin (LEE Tae-kyung) has rarely if ever received any form of acknowledgment for all the work she has done for her company, Jun-seol (LEE Sang-hyun) has taken advantage of his connections, not to mention his male privilege, to join the company in the position of Young-jin's superior. Although the shady nature of his hiring naturally leads her to see him as a rival, Young-jin keeps it to herself and even tries to show him some goodwill by helping him adjust to the company. With time, the two get closer and even start dating. But when she realizes that Jun-seol has been using her design ideas without asking her, let alone crediting her for her work, Young-jin is determined to claim them back, even though she has second thoughts about having to sacrifice her relationship.

Director KIM Soo-jung has already made a name for herself on the indie film scene, her previous film *A Blue Mouthed Face* having earned the Excellence Award prize at the Seoul Independent Film Festival in 2015. With her third feature project, she addresses a topic among the most emotional in Korean society, daring to ask the question: can a woman both pursue a career and find love without having any of the two undermining the other?

by Fabien Schneider



K-Movie Entertainment



JOSÉE

2020 | TBD | Romance, Drama

DIRECTOR KIM Jong-kwan

CAST HAN Ji-min, NAM Joo-hyuk

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** K-Movie Entertainment

TEL +82 70 8852 7111 **FAX** +82 70 7966 0488 **EMAIL** sales@kmovieenter.com

In the suburbs of Seoul, Young-seok (NAM Joo-hyuk), a senior college student, suddenly sees a young woman (HAN Ji-min) falling from her wheelchair in the street and helps her up. After bringing her home, she cooks him a simple meal and introduces herself as Josée, a name that, as he will later find out, comes from her favorite novel. Fascinated by this person who spends her time reading and knows about whiskey far too well, Young-seok starts to stop by her place on a regular basis to share meals and listen to her stories, each more incredible than the last. Before they know it, their friendship turns into romance.

After his critically acclaimed *Worst Woman* (2016) and the high-concept *The Table* (2016), KIM Jong-kwan's latest work is a Korean film adaptation of the 1985 Japanese novel *Josee, The Tiger And The Fish* by celebrated author TANABE Seiko. Although the story already received the film treatment in Japan in 2003, this one is expected to hover closer to the source material, albeit logically amended to fit a modern day's Korean context. HAN Ji-min, long confined to roles of love interests, reinvented herself when she starred as an ex-convict in the drama film *Miss Baek* (2018), earning Best Actress from the Blue Dragon Film Awards.

by Fabien Schneider

DON'T GO TOO FAR

2021 | 77 Min | Black Comedy

DIRECTOR PARK Hyun-yong

CAST SON Byung-ho, SON Jin-hoan, PARK Myung-sin, LEE Kyung-sung

RELEASE DATE 2021 **CONTACT** K-Movie Entertainment

TEL +82 70 8852 7111 **FAX** +82 70 7966 0488 **EMAIL** sales@kmovieenter.com

As their father is on his deathbed, four children are gathered for the reading of his will, which should determine how the patriarch's fortune of two million dollars should be split. No one comes out entirely satisfied. Whereas the eldest son is disappointed to get "only" one million, believing that his imminent status as family head gives him a legitimate claim to an ever bigger share, the other siblings are naturally enraged to discover that they are left with the other half of the sum to be shared between the three of them. The situation suddenly tips in favor of the latter when their elder brother is informed that his only son has just been abducted, with the kidnapper demanding a ransom of...two million dollars.

This debut feature from Director PARK Hyun-yong triggered curiosity for its deliberate theatrical aesthetics when it was invited to the Korean Cinema Today – Vision section of the Busan International Film Festival two years ago. Most of the narrative, separated in acts, consists in intense negotiations taking place on a stage with minimal set decoration, and every now and then an audience can even be seen sitting on one side of the room. Headlining a cast composed exclusively of stage performers is veteran actor SON Byung-ho, best known for his role in *R-Point* (2004).

by Fabien Schneider



Little Big Pictures



GO BACK

2019 | 96 Min | Drama, Thriller

DIRECTOR SEO Eunyoung

CAST PARK Ha-sun, KIM Woo-gyeom

RELEASE DATE 1st half of 2021 **CONTACT** Little Big Pictures

TEL +82 10 2028 1215 **FAX** +82 2 2263 8812 **EMAIL** julie@little-big.co.kr

Ji-won (HA Yun-kyung) is a determined junior police officer who one morning crosses paths with a mysterious woman named O-sun (PARK Ha-sun). O-sun is a social worker with a strong attachment to children who have been the victims of abuse, but despite her best efforts to help them, reality often intervenes. One summer day, a message from a kidnapper spreads around the nation, turning a kidnapping case into a media maelstrom. Ji-won begins to suspect that the case involves O-sun somehow. A death occurs and the deceased's daughter Bora disappears, and Ji-won finds out that Bora was one of the children in O-sun's care.

The latest film from director SEO Eunyoung, *Go Back* debuted this summer in the Korean Fantastic Competition at the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFAN), where it earned both a Distribution Award and the Best Actress Prize for PARK Ha-sun. SEO previously made the indie drama *Overman* (2015). Newly minted award-winner PARK has been a veteran of the screen for 15 years, with notable appearances in works such as *Midnight Runners* (2017), in which she plays the tough lieutenant at the police academy. HA Yun-kyung featured in *Park Hwa-young* (2017) and had a small part in this year's action-thriller *Time to Hunt*.

by Pierce Conran

MORE THAN FAMILY

2020 | 108 Min | Drama, Comedy

DIRECTOR CHOI Ha-na

CAST JUNG Krystal, JANG Hye-jin, CHOI Deok-moon

RELEASE DATE 2nd half of 2020 **CONTACT** Little Big Pictures

TEL +82 10 2028 1215 **FAX** +82 2 2263 8812 **EMAIL** julie@little-big.co.kr

While tutoring a student, Satsun (JUNG Krystal) unexpectedly becomes pregnant. She keeps the news to herself for a full five months before finally coming clean and telling her parents about it. Her stepfather Taehyo expresses great disappointment in her and this causes their relationship to grow even sourer than it already was. In the end, a dejected Satsun decides that she wants to track down her biological father. With this new plan in mind, she leaves home but the journey she goes on brings with it unexpected waves of memories relating to both her birth father and her stepfather. Despite all her efforts, she is unable to locate her father, but just when she is about to give up, she finally comes upon a clue that may help her.

The upcoming comedy-drama *More than Family* will mark the big screen debut of singing sensation JUNG Krystal, a member of the world-famous K-pop girl group f(x). While this may mark her first film outing, JUNG is well known for her TV drama work, which includes hits like *The Heirs*. Joining her on screen is none other than JANG Hye-jin, a member of the cast of BONG Joon Ho's *Parasite* (2019), which earned the Best Ensemble Award at the Screen Actors Guild Awards. The film is the debut feature of director CHOI Ha-na, a graduate of the Korea National University of Arts (K'Arts).

by Pierce Conran



Lotte Entertainment



SAMJIN COMPANY ENGLISH CLASS

2020 | 110 Min | Drama, Comedy

DIRECTOR LEE Jong-pil

CAST KO A-sung, E Som, PARK Hye-su

RELEASE DATE 2020 **CONTACT** Lotte Entertainment

TEL +82 2 6277 5907 **FAX** +82 2 3470 3439 **EMAIL** international02@lotte.net

Three young women experience discrimination at their workplace in the mid 1990s. As they only have high school diplomas, they are assigned to do insignificant chores with no hope of advancement at their company. One day, the company issues a memo stating that anyone who obtains a 600 score on the TOEIC exam (a standardized English level test) will be up for receiving a promotion. Ja-young (KO A-sung) Yu-nah (E Som) and Bo-ram (PARK Hye-su) thus enroll in English classes along with several other female high school graduates in their company. However, when Ja-young is sent on an errand to a factory in the countryside, she witnesses waste water being improperly disposed of into a river. Sensing foul play, she and her friends try to find evidence, but this lands them in hot water with the company.

Samjin Company English Class is the latest women-centric project in Korea's commercial realm, which is steadily beginning to bring more stories about women on the screen. The film features young women stars, including KO A-sung of *Snowpiercer* (2013), E Som (*Microhabitat*, 2017) and PARK Hye-su (*Swing Kids*, 2018) and is the latest directorial effort from LEE Jong-pil, who made *The Sound of a Flower* (2015).

by Pierce Conran

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

2020 | TBA | Musical Drama

DIRECTOR CHOI Kook-hee

CAST RYU Seung-yong, YEOM Jung-a, ONG Seoung-wu

RELEASE DATE 2020 **CONTACT** Lotte Entertainment

TEL +82 2 6277 5907 **FAX** +82 2 3470 3439 **EMAIL** international02@lotte.net

After devoting her entire life to her family as both a mother and a wife, Se-yeon (YEOM Jung-a) receives the news that she is gravely ill. Determined to finally live her life for herself, she sets out in search of her 'first love' from her high school days. Though he isn't happy about it, Se-yeon's strict husband Jin-bong (RYU Seung-yong) accompanies her in an attempt to honor her wishes. The journey they go on takes them on a trip through their own pasts, allowing them to revisit the most beautiful moments of their lives.

Following his bowling drama debut *Split* (2016) and the hit financial thriller *Default* (2018), rising star director CHOI Kook-hee tackles the musical drama genre with his latest effort *Life Is Beautiful*. Playing the couple who take their musical trip down memory lane are veteran stars YEOM Jung-a and RYU Seung-yong. Star of *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003), YEOM has recently appeared in the diner party comedy-drama smash *Intimate Strangers* (2018) as well as the TV drama sensation *Sky Castle*. Box office magnet RYU recently led the comedy hit *Extreme Job* (2019) and stars in the Netflix series *Kingdom*. *Life Is Beautiful* will also mark the feature film acting debut of ONG Seoung-wu, the popular singer who in the K-pop band Wanna One.

by Pierce Conran



Mirovision/Studio Bonanza



POSSESSED

2020 | 103 Min | Black Comedy, Mystery

DIRECTOR JUNG Ha-yong

CAST JUNG Yi-rang, HAM Gun-soo, CHOI Yi-tae

RELEASE DATE 2021 **CONTACT** Mirovision/Studio Bonanza

TEL +82 2 797 7589 **FAX** +82 2 797 7587 **EMAIL** sales@mirovision.com

The production crew of a TV show, along with an animator and guests, are joined by a shaman and a club of paranormal activity enthusiasts to explore an abandoned church nestled deep in the misty mountains of the Gangwon Province. The eerie building has long been known among some circles for the strange apparitions that have been reported there, and this ragtag team of misfits is determined to lift the veil on the truth lying behind albeit for different purposes. Soon enough, they stumble upon people who are very much alive, but who seem to come out of nowhere, as if they had always occupied the area. Slowly, the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place, leading them to discover something that has nothing to do with the supernatural yet is somehow even worse than what they expected.

JUNG Ha-yong's first feature project, *Possessed* naturally brings to mind the surprise horror hit *Gonjiam: Haunted Asylum* (2018) which also centered on the exploration of a haunted place. It premiered earlier this year at the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival. Teaming up with him is CHOI Yi-tae, an up-and-coming performer who won Best Actor in the youth category at the Chungmuro Short Film Festival.

by Fabien Schneider

AACHI AND SSIPAK

2020 | 90 Min | Animation, Action

DIRECTOR JO Beom-jin

CAST RYOO Seung-bum, IM Chang-jung, HYUN Young, SHIN Hae-chul

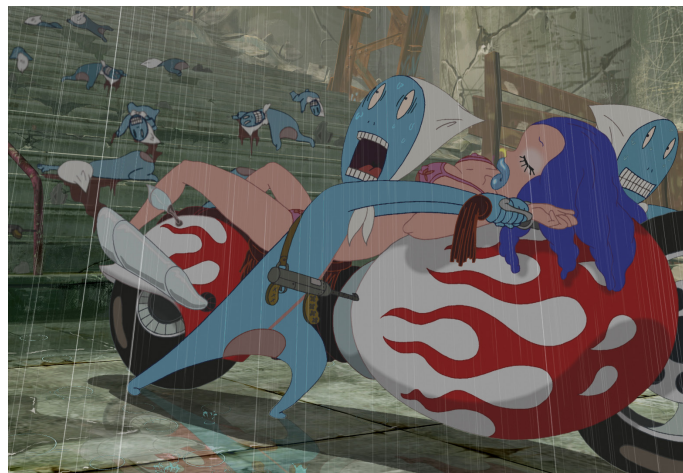
RELEASE DATE 2020 **CONTACT** Mirovision/Studio Bonanza

TEL +82 2 797 7589 **FAX** +82 2 797 7587 **EMAIL** sales@mirovision.com

In a dystopian future where all natural resources have been depleted, the only way humanity has found to keep producing the energy that is key to its survival is...fecal matter. It is now everyone's duty to defecate regularly, and an ID chip implanted in people's anal area monitors their daily production, which is then used to calculate how many "juicybars" – a highly addictive popsicle – they will receive as rewards. Small-time juicybar dealers Aachi and Ssipak believe they have struck gold when they meet Beautiful, a porn star whose exceptional bowel movements grant a much larger haul of juicybars every time she contributes to the joint effort. But she also catches the interest of the Diaper Gang, who mutated into shriveled blue creatures due to juicybar addiction, as well as that of the police.

The Korean animation industry may not be as vibrant as in Hollywood or Japan, but it still saw some remarkable efforts to carve out a new niche over the two last decades. *Aachi and Ssipak* might be the boldest of them all, with an uncompromising adult story that takes this bawdy premise and runs with it. First released in 2006, it won Best Animated Film at the Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival.

by Fabien Schneider



M-Line Distribution



FIGHTER

2020 | 104 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR YUN Jéro

CAST LIM Seong-mi, BAEK Seo-bin

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** M-Line Distribution

TEL +82 2 796 2427 **FAX** +82 2 796 2429 **EMAIL** sales@mline-distribution.com

North Korean refugee Jina has been undergoing several months of social adjustment training and now that she's able to start her new life, she moves into a small studio in Seoul. Her dream is to bring her father down to South Korea to live with her, but no matter how diligent and hardworking she is, she finds her efforts to raise the necessary funds thwarted every turn due to the discrimination she faces as a North Korean living in South Korea. One day her broker finds a new position for her as a cleaner in a boxing gym. As she witnesses the young and confident female boxers, Jina begins to feel a new desire burn within her.

FIGHTER, which is screening in the Korean Cinema Today - Vision section of this year's Busan International Film Festival, is the latest film by indie filmmaker YUN Jéro, and one of two he has at the festival this year, along with the documentary *Song Hae 1927*. YUN's work has frequently focused on the plight of North Korean refugees, and their sense of displacement and lack of acceptance in a new society. This includes his previous narrative feature *Beautiful Days*, the comeback project of actress LEE Na-young, which was selected as the opening film of BIFF in 2018.

by Pierce Conran

THREE SISTERS

2020 | 115 Min | Drama

DIRECTOR LEE Seung-won

CAST MOON So-ri, KIM Sun-young, JANG Yoon-ju

RELEASE DATE Spring, 2021 **CONTACT** M-Line Distribution

TEL +82 2 796 2427 **FAX** +82 2 796 2429 **EMAIL** sales@mline-distribution.com

Three very different sisters are each struggling with their personal problems. Hee-sook (KIM Sun-young), or Mrs. Sorry, has been neglected by her family, while Mi-yeon (MOON So-ri), Mrs. Devout, is aware that her husband has been having an affair. Lastly, Mi-ok (JANG Yoon-ju), Mrs. Hysterical, is the oddball of the trio, who constantly tries to drink the frustrations of her life away. These three sisters gather together for their father's birthday, but who knows what will happen.

One of this year's Jeonju Cinema Projects, *Three Sisters* features an eye-catching cast, with legendary star MOON So-ri, acclaimed character actress KIM Sun-young and popular top model JANG Yoon-ju. MOON is known for classics such as *Oasis* (2002) and *A Good Lawyer's Wife* (2003) and more recent films like *Little Forest* (2018) and *Juror 8* (2019). KIM, who co-starred with MOON in *Juror 8*, was recently seen in *MAL•MO•E: The Secret Mission* (2018) and *Miss Baek* (2018). Meanwhile JANG made a big impression in RYOO Seung-wan's 2015 hit *Veteran* and will soon appear in the RA Miran vehicle *Citizen Deokhee* (translated title). *Three Sisters* is the third feature film by director LEE Seung-won, following *Communication & Lies*, a New Currents selection at the Busan International Film Festival in 2015, and *Happy Bus Day*, which bowed at the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 2017.

by Pierce Conran



Showbox



THE GOLDEN HOLIDAY

2020 | 106 Min | Comedy Action

DIRECTOR KIM Bong-han

CAST KWAK Do-won, KIM Dae-myeong, KIM Hie-won, KIM Sang-ho

RELEASE DATE September 29, 2020 **CONTACT** Showbox

TEL +82 2 3218 5649 **FAX** +82 2 3444 6688 **EMAIL** sales@showbox.co.kr

A detective from a countryside police station, Byung-soo (KWAK Do-won) has long been pressed by his family to go on a trip abroad. He eventually gives in, as he is about to take his wife and their daughter to the Philippines for the 10th anniversary of their wedding. What his wife does not know, however, is that Byung-soo's true motive for this trip is to track down an old friend, Yong-bae (KIM Sang-ho), who fled there after conning him. It doesn't take long for Byung-soo to track him down to a prison in Manilla, where he is serving time for murder after he was framed by a hitman working for a local gang. Yong-bae tells him about the treasure of Yamashita's Gold he was searching for and that brought him on the radar of the gang and promises him a share of that treasure if he agrees to help him prove his innocence. Shot on location in the Philippines, this film is the fourth directing effort of KIM Bong-han, who was responsible for the political drama *Ordinary Person* (2017). KWAK Do-won is best known for *The Wailing* (2016), which chilled the audience's blood in Cannes when it was screened out of competition, and is headlining a comedy for the first time in his career.

by Fabien Schneider

SINKHOLE

2020 | TBD | Disaster Drama

DIRECTOR KIM Ji-hoon

CAST CHA Seung-won, KIM Sung-kyun, LEE Kwang-soo

RELEASE DATE TBD **CONTACT** Showbox

TEL +82 2 3218 5649 **FAX** +82 2 3444 6688 **EMAIL** :sales@showbox.co.kr

After more than a decade of tightening his belt, Dong-won (KIM Sung-kyun), a modest hard worker, has finally amassed enough money to become a homeowner. Upon moving in with his wife and son, he organizes a housewarming party to which he invites several colleagues. But the heavy rains that have taken place over the last few days have slowly carved a huge cavity under the house, and suddenly the entire house gets swallowed into a sinkhole. Although they survive the fall, they now find themselves trapped a few hundred meters underground. With the rain not looking like it will stop anytime soon to the point where it threatens to flood the hole, Dong-won, his neighbor Man-su (CHA Seung-won) who was passing by and the others have no choice but to try to find a way out by themselves. A director well versed in disaster films, KIM Ji-hoon is making his comeback eight years after releasing back to back *Sector 7* (2011) and *Tower* (2012). CHA Seung-won, who made his name in the boisterous Korean comedies typical of the early 2000s, such as *Ghost House* (2004) which also entailed an ill-advised house purchase, has been back in favor again after his turn as a gangster in the hit thriller *Believer* (2018), and was last seen in the comedy *Cheer Up, Mr. Lee* (2019).

by Fabien Schneider





The Way You See Changes

AHN Jae-huun

Director of THE SHAMAN SORCERESS

Only a few Korean directors make theatrical animated feature films that aren't for kids. Among them, very few contain deeper themes and philosophies. Director AHN Jae-huun and his studio Meditation With a Pencil have showcased the beauty of Korea's feature animated films to audiences who are familiar with Hollywood and Japanese animation. Following his previous animated films *When Bucketwheat Flowers Blossom* (2014) and *The Shower* (2017), AHN presents *The Shaman Sorceress*, the third title in his Korean modern short story project. The film received the Special Jury Award at the 44th Annecy International Animation Film Festival in June. It is the second Korean animation to be awarded at Annecy since *Oseam* (2003) won an award there 16 years ago. Based on the original novel of the same name by KIM Dong-ni, the film deals with various conflicts in a fast-changing society through the family feud between Mohwa, a shaman mother, and Wook-yi, her converted Christian son. Director AHN shared his ideas about his powerful musical animation.

Belated congratulations on the award at Annecy for *The Shaman Sorceress*. How do you feel?

I believe that making animations based on Korean modern short stories is a significant and valuable attempt though it may not be commercially viable. I made up my mind to finish the project with this one. I feel glad that the award gave me a happy ending. It is also meaningful that my studio, Meditation With a Pencil, and the team's work have left a mark in animation history. Every member of the team is so talented that they could work at Pixar or Dreamworks. However, they are committed to working in a Korean studio. Their parents have supported their decision. The award is a huge encouragement to both the team and their families.

The film has a long relationship with Annecy. In 2016, the film was introduced as a work in progress during its early production and eventually won the award.

My biggest disappointment is that the festival was held online due to COVID-19. Imagine if my film had screened at a big theater. In that case, it could have aroused more interest in Korea's traditions and Asian animations. When the project was invited to the Work in Progress section in 2016, I emphasized the issue of diversity. The award means that my intention was well received.

The film was first introduced at the 2018 Busan International Film Festival. This year, you submitted a different version to Annecy. Could

you tell us about the changes?

You can't easily change the story structure of animation. So the structure is the same. However, I like to keep revising drawings until the release date. You can never be satisfied with your drawings. You will notice some distinctive changes from the last version. In the earlier version, the background during the Japanese occupation period was more colorful, in order to match the overall tone. However, I studied more materials and realized that my interpretation wasn't appropriate. So I decided to illustrate the times in a plain tone. I tried hard to deliver the real beauty of our land with the at most authenticity.

Compared to your previous films in the modern short story series - *When Bucketwheat Flowers Blossom* and *The Shower* - this one feels slightly different.

Let's say my work is a love story. When you are attracted to someone, you give a small present or a hand-written letter and wait for a response. I've tried to get closer to the audience since *Green Days* (2011). My biggest wish was that *The Shaman Sorceress* would make the audience feel the joy of watching and listening to an animation. That is why I changed my drawing style and tried a musical. Animation production is almost like a director's one-man show. However, I wanted my studio to be more organized in the process of making the film. I hired an assistant director for better communication in the team before moving to the next process. It was a new experiment for me.

Based on the famous short story written by KIM Dong-ni, the film expressed different layers of conflicts in the modernization of Korea. Which elements did you focus on as you adapted the story for animation?

The story is about the conflict between old and new. I thought the story was about the end of jobs. We are witnessing a significant change in our vocation. When many jobs come and go, we need to have a proper perspective. Current job situations are also the confrontation between the old and new. You should decide how to respond when your job is no longer necessary. I didn't elaborate the point in the story, but it was important to me. I also noticed that when the author set the story in the 1920s, he depicted Mohwa as an independent woman. I found it fascinating how she stood firm and stayed on in her career in every situation.

This time you tried a musical animation. You didn't use cute, simple songs, they are serious ones with intense, strong melodies. What did



you think was the most important element in the music?

It would be ideal if the musical elements become a part of the story like *Les Misérables*. To do so, you need some budget and tightly-calculated scheduling. In my film, I expressed the complexity of Mohwa's life and ideas not through monologues but songs. When the mother and son performed their choreographed song with swords, I tried to express the scene in a conventional but Korean musical style.

The opening was beautiful, when Mohwa offered a ritual through a drum beat in a misty forest.

The opening is based on the original novel that describes a shamanistic dance in a painting, which is the short story's title - *Munyeodo* (The Portrait of Shaman). At first, I intended to render the opening in KIM Hong-do's folk painting style. However, I wanted to highlight the opening. As a result, the three to four-minute one-take focuses on her dance. My goal was that the opening would intrigue the audience so that they might watch the film a little longer. (laughs) I used only one small drum because a single instrument was enough to deliver a certain elegance and dignity. When you listen to the real drum sound, it beats your heart violently.

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The story reaches its climax when the shaman mother confronts her Christian son. How did you want to express this intense moment?

When you make an animation, you don't always explain to your team about the whole picture in your mind. They will understand when all the pieces are combined. But I didn't do that for this particular sequence. Every member of the team had to be on the same page and understand what the director intended. Working on the sequence, we were able to organize our work process more systematically. I will make some improvements to the sequence before its release.

After showcasing your film and winning an award at a festival, you now have to consider releasing it. Tell us about your plan.

The timing isn't right to release a film. Due to the coronavirus crisis, movie theaters are going through hard times. I hope to release the film when things settle down enough to accept diverse films.

The production of theatrical feature animations is still difficult in Korea compared to children's animations. Please tell us about your next feature animated film, *A Thousand Years Together*, which will be unveiled at the Busan Asian Contents & Film Market.

A Thousand Years Together has been supported by the Korean Film Council, which recognized a director's attempt to continue his story. The film is about people living in Korea, especially 20-somethings, and their worries. You can imagine what lies ahead in life by relating it to death. The main character keeps saying that she wants to die. And she

dies eventually. She goes through some events and comes to life again. I intend to capture the landscape and livelihood of contemporary Seoul in 2020. I have thought a lot about death since I was young. The 'kokdu' character, who connects this world and the afterworld in Korea's tradition, is an important medium to connect my entire work. I didn't add the character just with regards to character animation or merchandising. 'Kokdu' is related to death in the story. Production is about 70 to 80 percent complete. You may feel that this is an animation you have never seen before. Currently, I am casting voice actors. My music director told me to cast a famous singer and actress for the main role. I am dying to hear back. (laughs) Among the characters, Woosunseng and Gaksison are important. I try hard to cast voice actors who can play them.

How will *A Thousand Years Together* influence the future of your studio Meditation With a Pencil and your work?

I am proud of the project, and consider it my life's masterpiece. I often share with my team that I feel so lucky to be making this film, and don't ask for more. Animators know when they are working on a project that will never come again. So I've put all my energy into this film. Someday I will have to finish my career. I hope that the ending will be different from Mohwa's in *The Shaman Sorceress*. The happiness you feel as an artist and as an individual can be different. I want to be a happy person, which is crucial to me. The joy you get from work is a harsh one. (laughs) ㉿

by KIM Hye-seon (Film Journalist) | photographed by OH Kye Ohk

Justin KIM

Producer of Korean-Indonesian Co-production

During his 6-year stint in CJ ENM's International Distribution Team, producer Justin KIM acquired experience in overseas marketing and sales, contributing to the sales boom of such major works as *The Handmaiden* (2016) and *Snowpiercer* (2013). Driven by his desire to engage in the whole process of film production, he transferred to the International Production Team, and jumped right into the co-production business in Southeast Asia. The impact of COVID-19 has caused an inevitable shift in the global paradigm—as evident in the suspension of filming, stagnant ticket sales and the rapid rise of OTT media services. How has the international co-production market evolved over the years? Producer Justin KIM, an all-round player in international business—from planning, production, marketing to sales—answers a series of questions.

The Answer Lies in Co-Existence and Localization

Before joining the International Production Team, you worked in the International Distribution Team. Were there any works that you found particularly memorable?

From the presales stage, PARK Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* was in my charge for a long time. In the end, it set a new sales record. I found it rewarding to hear positive responses from the buyers I'd met in Cannes after they watched the film. When you sell a film without showing the main feature, the result may depend on your ability as a salesperson. It's a matter of how you present and pitch the film. It's a great feeling when someone is satisfied with the film that you've persuaded them to buy.

How has CJ ENM's focus shifted over the past decade in terms of screenplay development and co-production in Southeast Asia? Did the remake of *Miss Granny* (2014) provide a starting point?

After the Vietnamese version of *Miss Granny* came out in 2015, I started to recognize the importance of transmedia and multi-territory strategies. Even without CJ's co-production efforts, *Miss Granny* was remade in quite a few countries through copyright sales—a testament to the power of intellectual property. After Vietnam, it crossed the border over to Indonesia and Thailand, which was only possible because we'd been in constant contact with local producers even before we entered their markets. The first original film we produced in Vietnam became an immediate success, but it did not perform well in Indonesia. That made us realize that we must understand





the characteristics of each market and carefully handpick intellectual properties with which to approach them.

What do you take into consideration when planning a production with the Southeast Asian market in mind?

We call the whole region “Southeast Asia” for the sake of convenience, but Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand are very different from one another. Therefore, it is important to consider the characteristics of each country—from its culture, language and sensitivity to preferred genres. In Indonesia, horror films have traditionally fared well with the general public; there are thousands of ghost stories and legends. As befits a country stretching across a large area from east to west, a whole variety of ghosts originate from different regions. (laughs) Given the cautious nature of the Islamic culture, enjoying a horror film in the darkness of the theater may be their way of relieving stress. Indonesia could be a good model for both the Korean and US markets that suffer from a lack of new horror items. Since 2018, we have produced 10 films in Indonesia. Last year, horror films such as *DreadOut*, *Death Whisper* (a remake of *Whispering Corridors*) and *Impetigore* by Joko ANWAR, the director of *Satan’s Slaves* (2017), became box office hits. Horror films are also popular in Thailand, where there is a clear preference for melodramas and romantic comedies. Since Thailand shares some sentiments with Chinese culture, we often develop productions with a view to entering the Chinese market. Of the three countries mentioned above, Vietnam is our oldest business partner. Thanks to the popularity of family

comedies there, the remakes of *Miss Granny* and *Sunny* (2011) had successful results. However, since the market seems to be biased towards comedy, we hope to expand it by developing new genres including thrillers.

Do you often work with star actors?

Successful casting does not always guarantee good box office results. The market does not rely on star actors alone. In particular, horror films featuring lesser known actors can be very successful. It is important to develop a new talent pool, because we must establish a process that allows us to co-exist with and learn from local people. We’re open to recruiting local directors, producers and staff as well as new actors. The OTT market in Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand is growing rapidly, and I’ve been eagerly watching TV series to learn about up and coming actors in these three countries.

How do you build a partnership with the local production team?

Since your time on the ground there is limited, there must be some communication difficulties.

Just one month of participating in local production teaches you more about the country’s culture than several months of sitting in an office and researching. In international business, it is imperative to experience and absorb the local culture first hand. Ultimately, producing a work overseas is difficult because we cannot always be there. We have benefited from using contact-free communication—which has accelerated since the dawn of COVID-19. We send constant reminders to the local production team via phone, email and social media to

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the extent that it seems too much sometimes. They, too, have many projects going on at the same time. So, in order for the project to run smoothly, one of us must show a huge amount of enthusiasm and check that everything is on schedule. Furthermore, the more information the producer has about the source material, the better the marketing plan will be.

In Korea, the marketing and promotion stage of a film involves the participation of online communities, the use of social media network and offline events. How is the situation in Southeast Asia?

We've introduced a new marketing system and promotional events such as showcases and premiere screenings. The concept of film promotion is not as widely accepted as in Korea, but there have been many new cases based on the Korean model. At the same time, we learn a lot from them as well. We exchange our knowledge and expertise.

When it comes to completed co-productions, the role of international sales is getting more and more important. Have you seen any notable changes recently?

When it comes to sales in Southeast Asia over the past few years, I must mention the rise of OTT platforms. The market has grown bigger, and unique platforms aimed at different target groups have emerged as key players—each with its own concept, content and genres. It is good to have diverse platforms to partner with. In addition, both the additional local markets and the ability to appeal overseas has grown.

What are the advantages of remaking Korean films? What impact has

the Korean wave of cinema had in Southeast Asia?

We've had tremendous success with *Parasite* (2019), *Train to Busan* (2016) and *Peninsula*. When *Glorious Days*, a remake of *Sunny*, was released in Indonesia, we asked KANG So-ra to join the local promotional effort. Thanks to the Korean wave, quite a few people were already familiar with the original work. The strength of Korean intellectual property lies in stories that are well-structured. Popular films present stories with clear plots, and their didactic messages about rewarding good and punishing evil draw favorable responses from Southeast Asian audiences. However, we only proceed with a remake when absolutely necessary, in consideration of the local market. Even then, our top priority is localization, and we try to strike a balance with the original work.

In the future, which CJ films will you consider for remakes?

My Annoying Brother (2016) was a box office hit at the time of its release in Vietnam. Since the film has a warm message and is based on the comedy genre, its remake is likely to do well in Thailand and Vietnam. Personally, I'd like to expand comedy-driven markets by introducing hybrid works combining comedy, action and crime genres. Perhaps films like *Veteran* (2015) and *Extreme Job* (2019) can become game changers.

In the wake of COVID-19, the global film industry is going through a period of confusion in all aspects—from production to theatrical release. What is the situation in Southeast Asia? What changes do you expect to see in the future?

I can only surmise at this point that, of the three Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam will be the first to recover. Recently, *Deliver Us from Evil* was released and garnered positive responses. I hope to see more works—from Korea or abroad—before the end of the year that can help restore the box office. There are several works in the pipeline for the Vietnamese market next year, and so we're considering different contact-free communication methods at the moment. In Indonesia, we recently wrapped up shooting a new horror film. All the staff and cast members completed thorough medical checks in advance, and filming took place in an isolated location deep in the mountains. This was also made possible because in Indonesia, an average film takes 20-30 days of filming to complete. A full suspension of film production would have a dire impact on the industry on the whole, and therefore it is important that we keep going, albeit slowly. ㉠

by KIM So-mi(Cine 21 Repoter) | photographed by BAEK Jong-heon

Entirely devoid of descriptive narration, archive images, which are placed front and center, are used to weave together a narrative that connects clips revisited from today's point of view and the characters involved in the events. The daring typography by KIM Kijo and the stylish music by DJ Soulscape add a touch of flourish. This experiment in documentary filmmaking, which diverges from the formal and aesthetic assumptions of traditional documentaries, is *Documentary Insight – Archive Project Modern Korea* (here in after *Modern Korea*) from the public broadcaster KBS (Korean Broadcasting System). It was produced with the express goal of using the KBS archives to thoroughly examine the many layers underlying major social issues in Korea. The series focuses on six key events that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, providing new insight based on our current understanding of

history. The topics explored on the screen include the division of the Korean peninsula (*Our Only Wish*), the collapse of the Sampoong department store (*We Built this City: Sampoong*), the Korean college entrance exams (*The Test of Your Life: Birth of K-SAT*), professional baseball fever (*Dynasty*), the 1997 Korean Financial Crisis (*Great Expectations*), and the rise of a religious cult (*Rapture: The Day They Vanished*). This series, which radically departs from what has widely been considered to be the rules of documentary making at KBS, has been greatly successful, as it has recorded high TV ratings and been well received by film critics. Most notably, the series was invited to the Special Focus section of the Jeonju International Film Festival (JIFF) and the Brussel Korean Film Festival. I sat down with LEE Taewoong, the senior producer of the series, to talk about the wide appeal of *Modern Korea*.



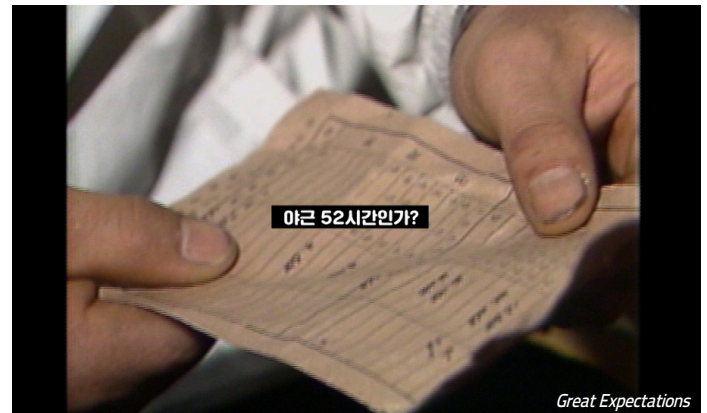
Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

All six episodes of *Modern Korea* were screened under the title *KBS Collection: Audience Engagement* in JIFF's Special Focus section. Can you speak on how, although these were the same versions as the ones that aired, seeing the documentaries on the big screen must have been a different experience from seeing them on television?

I noticed that we are more focused watching it in a theater, in the dark. Had I known people would be seeing the documentary in such conditions, I probably would have made a few things differently. The current version is tailored for viewers watching it on online platforms such as YouTube, rather than for television. Things like the size of the captions to the way the narrative flows were designed to tie together a variety of footage and fragmented stories. If this project had been conducted with a theater audience in mind, we could have gone a bit easier on the captions and slowed down the pace.

Although *Modern Korea* is a TV documentary, it has been receiving considerable attention from various film festivals, most notably JIFF. Two episodes of the series, *We Built This City: Sampoong* and *The Test of Your Life: Birth of K-SAT*, will also be screened at the Brussels Korean Film Festival in October. Unlike other TV documentaries, this one is also receiving attention as a film product.

You're right. Once a documentary is televised, that's it. That's the end goal. For *Modern Korea*, on the other hand, you could say it is a case where the long tail rule applies. In fact, demand has risen with the passing of time. Most recently we have agreed to produce a Blu-ray edition of the



series with Plain Archive. The semantics of this documentary differs widely from what is usually viewed as the language of TV documentaries, and I believe this is what has stirred this interest. While making it, I personally approached this work as if it were a film rather than a documentary, and I made a conscious attempt to break the mold of the normal explanation-oriented documentaries. My focus on the “show don’t tell” rule was also a technique to give it the cachet of a movie. Another thing we did was put the staff credits at the beginning. Usually, if you do this in a documentary, you will be criticized by your boss for doing for promoting yourself, but we decided to take this approach because we thought it would allow for a better immersion of the audience. Luckily, the response to this move seems to have been positive – probably because people took it as something familiar, as if they were watching a movie.

LEE Taewoong

Producer of KBS ARCHIVE PROJECT MODERN KOREA

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that *Modern Korea* was made possible thanks to the extensive archival videos kept by KBS. Has the recent digitization of their analog tapes opened the door to the production of documentaries that use found footage?

Absolutely. It would have been much more challenging to make *Modern Korea* without digitization technology. We would have definitely been short of time, but I'm not even sure it would have been possible to even carry all of those tapes out of storage and into the editing room. They're really heavy. (laughs) Now that KBS has digitized its massive stock of footage, we can use them. Essentially, everything that KBS has televised over the years is stored in the archives. Of course, there are unfortunately some limitations: the pre-1980s material is in pretty rough shape, for example, and sometimes we find that the metadata is not well preserved and there is a lot of material missing.

From start to finish, episode 1, *Our Only Wish*, which you directed yourself, perfectly demonstrates the strengths of archival documentaries. For instance, footage of the attempted assassination of President PARK Chung-hee really shows what these archives can bring to the table, and this footage was only available because KBS is a public broadcasting station. There are rising demands that KBS opens its archives to the public since these recordings are a valuable part of the annals of modern Korean history. Can you give us some insight into the discussion being had within KBS on this topic?

For starters, I believe opening the archives to the public is the way to go. This is my own opinion, but I believe that upper management at KBS also shares this sentiment. But,

apart from doing so, there are a fair number of issues, mostly related to copyright and portrait rights, that must be sorted out. If we want to establish a system to open things up to the public, I think we need to have procedures in place that can properly address these issues. Personally, I think, as a first step, we should authorize the usage of footage for research and educational purposes.

Perhaps it is because of the success of *Modern Korea*, but several other broadcasting stations are coming out with their own archival documentaries. What makes the usage of archival footage so powerful?

Every so often, when you are going through past footage, you will come across something and think, "This is great, I just struck gold." Digging up footage and putting it to new use is a tremendously rewarding experience.

Well, all that gold you dug up certainly seems to have been put to good use as *Modern Korea* recorded an average TV rating of over 4 percent. The most watched episode was *Rapture: The Day they Vanished*, which recorded a 5.1 percent rating. Nonetheless, I imagine you must have had your share of challenges since this project goes against the grain in so many ways.

I am currently working in the Culture Division at KBS, but I am originally from the Sports Division. We don't make many documentaries there, so I was given quite a lot of freedom from the start. This wasn't a particular one-man mission to stray away from the existing grammar used at KBS by any stretch of the imagination. Many inside KBS had already



We Built this City: Sampoong



The Test of Your Life: Birth of K-SAT

voiced the need to break the mold of KBS documentaries, which were leaning towards campaign ads. After seeing *88/18*, management seems to have decided that something could come up from a collaboration with me.

It also occurs to me that the properties of these works – the use of footage – works very well with today’s diversification of platforms, where one video can be easily converted and consumed on a TV screen, a mobile screen or in a theater.

With *Modern Korea* being a collage of fragments of archival footage, you can start at any point in the documentary, skip a part, you will still quite easily pick up what is taking place. This is the result of the source itself being truncated. This means viewers can engage the documentary in a very casual manner; it’s not something you watch once you are sitting and concentrated. It also makes it easy to take snippets of the documentary and upload them to YouTube. So, in that respect, there is a lot that corresponds to the way we consume media today. This is equally true from the production side of things: given that content creators are also already accustomed to fast-paced material such as this, they are probably both creators and consumers of each other’s content.

Having made extensive use of archival footage when making *88/18* and *Modern Korea*, I am interested to hear your thoughts on the value of archives, a topic I am sure you have thought about a great deal.

The saying “standing on the shoulders of giants” seems about right. During the filmmaking process, I felt like I was stealing all the hard work from my predecessors. (laughs) I



When plans for this project were first announced, it was stated that the objective was to examine key events in our history from multiple perspectives. We wanted to present both sides of any issue for which there is no consensus.



heard recently that proposals for new TV programs more and more often include plans to use archival material. Of course, this is something a public broadcasting station like KBS can do successfully, and this is their advantage. At the same time, we need to be careful – we don’t want to lean on the past so much that we forget to make new material.

Rather than using footage that was already aired, you discover from today’s point of view previously unseen footage, which was discarded at the time or buried somewhere, and used it in novel ways. Naturally, that adds a layer of historical irony to it.

When plans for this project were first announced, it was stated that the objective was to examine key events in our history from multiple perspectives. We wanted to present both sides of any issue for which there is no consensus. And so, while working on this project, one of the rules we agreed on with the participating producers was to avoid sticking too much to one side’s argument, as we hoped to introduce new perspectives using the material we now have access to. This was something we discussed a lot.

The perspective you took on the various characters appearing in the series is also an aspect that must have required special caution.

This is why we had a set of rules regarding interviews. We agreed to include, as best as we could, people directly involved in the events, who experienced them first hand, and people who appeared in the footage. It is common to have people like specialists and professors of the relevant field to present the topic, and although this makes things easier, it would have been difficult to achieve the multiple perspectives we had in mind if we followed that approach. Rather than focus on assessments, these people could have provided, the rule we wanted to keep was to lend an ear to the people who were part of these historical events.

I heard there are plans to add 4 more parts to extend the series.

On September 3, *The Broadcast of the Most Earnest People*, from YEOM Ji-sun, the producer of *Great Expectations*, was broadcast. It is a special extra episode made to commemorate Broadcasting Day. The other episodes are currently underway. The plan is to air one episode every week in March 2021. Director JEONG Jae-eun is participating in one episode. As I said before, there have been calls for the opening of the archives, and I believe that this will be a truly symbolic gesture in that direction. ㉠

by LEE Hwa-jung(Film Journalist) | photographed by BAEK Jong-heon



K The Advent of -Universes

Korean Film Storytelling Growing in Scope



While Hollywood blockbusters faltered this summer owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Korean zombie action film *Peninsula* dominated the domestic box office. According to the film's main investor and distributor NEW, it has drawn 3.8 million viewers in Korea since its release on July 15. Released in 20 territories including markets in North America, Asia and Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand, the title grossed USD 51.55 million worldwide as of August 23. Since *Peninsula* is second only to *Parasite* in terms of foreign presales for a Korean film with distribution rights sold in 190 territories, it is all but assured to keep adding to its box office total. The secret? The fact it is part of a franchise that started with director YEON Sang-ho's *Train to Busan*, which attracted 10 million viewers in Korea and initiated the golden age of the K-zombie genre around the world four years ago. Along with the animation film *Seoul Station*, these three films are set in the same universe, which is called the "Yeoniverse" (a portmanteau of YEON Sang-ho and Universe).

But it isn't just *Peninsula*. Creating a shared universe is anew trend that has recently hit the Korean film industry. This seems like the obvious answer to the domination of the box office, TV ratings and secondary markets by Hollywood movie franchises such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe over the last decade. According to the report "Analysis of consumer trends and film selection process in Korea" published by the Korean Film Council in 2019, the proportion of people who responded that their decision to watch a movie was influenced by whether or not it belongs to a franchise hovered every year between 3 and 4 out of 10 people. There are also many benefits to building a shared universe when targeting overseas markets. Could we totally rule out the possibility that *Peninsula*'s official selection in this year's Cannes festival, canceled due to the pandemic, might have been influenced by YEON's previous film *Train to Busan*, which Cannes Chief Thierry FRÉMAUX in 2016 hailed as the "best midnight screening of all time"? Even *Rampant*, a period zombie film that bears no relation whatsoever to *Train to Busan*, was already drawing attention from overseas buyers just for being the new zombie title from NEW, the production company behind *Train to Busan*.

One of the works that has brought about this franchise trend is *Along with the Gods* from KIM Yong-hwa. The two parts of this fantasy series depicting the Korean version of the underworld were released in the winter of 2017 and the summer of 2018, respectively, and became "10 million twin legends" as they collectively filled 26 million seats in Korea.

According to its distributor Lotte Entertainment, the fantasy series earned USD 57.66 million in overseas markets. This was more than enough to cover the two films' KRW 40 billion (USD \$35 million) price tag, which at the time was way above the average budget of Korean blockbusters.

Flexibility in universe

Whereas the *Along with the Gods* series, based on the webtoon of the same name, was more traditional in that it spawned a sequel that continued the story of the first part with the same character, the cinematic universes seen in recent Korean films are characterized by a bigger creative license in terms of the directions taken by the follow-ups. *Peninsula* didn't bring back GONG Yoo and Don LEE from *Train to Busan*, opting instead for a completely different story and new leads in the person of GANG Dong-won and LEE Jung-hyun. Another summer blockbuster, *Steel Rain2: Summit* has taken a more experimental approach. Based on the inter-Korean political fiction webtoon *Steel Rain* whose story was also penned by director YANG Woo-suk, it is the follow-up of the film *Steel Rain*, which sold 4.45 million tickets in Korea in 2017. The second part only shares the same cinematic universe; the story it delivers is entirely new. The director explains that this sequel is the result of him exploring various crisis simulations regarding the Korean conflict, with the difference this time being that they were based on scenarios created by foreign geopolitical scholars. Interestingly, in the sequel, JUNG Woo-sung and KWAK Do-won have switched camps. This was a deliberate casting decision, since, as YANG explains, he wanted "to show the irony that we wouldn't even be able to break the stalemate even if we were to swap positions between the North and the South".

As major film investment and distribution companies such as CJ ENM, Lotte Entertainment and NEW have been jumping into the production of TV series and Korean and international online streaming platforms (OTT services) such as Netflix are gaining in popularity, the continuous efforts to expand cinematic universes to TV and OTT services have also contributed to the development of franchises.

In particular, building on the success of the *Along with the Gods* series, Lotte's entry into TV show production last year through the period drama TV series *Joseon Survival* was significant. This August, Lotte announced the creation of a new franchise, starting with the production of *Concrete Utopia* (working title), which will be directed by UM Tae-hwa

(*Vanishing Time: A Boy who Returned*) and star LEE Byung-hun, PARK Seo-jun and PARK Bo-young. In collaboration with Lezhin Studio, the film investment and production subsidiary of Lezhin Entertainment which also operates the international webtoon platform Lezhin Comics, Lotte plans to “develop the story of the survivors of a giant earthquake and the world they live in across a variety of media including films and TV series, starting with *Concrete Utopia*”. The film is a disaster thriller that follows survivors gathered around the Royal Palace Apartment complex, the only building still standing after a massive earthquake hits Seoul, and is an adaptation of *Pleasant Neighbors*, the second story in KIM Sung-nyung’s webtoon series *Happy Boy*, which has been serially published on Lezhin Comics since 2014. The idea is to adapt the wide range of episodes from the webtoon in a fittingly diverse selection of genres and media.

Expanding universes in SF and horror

Science-fiction and horror stand out among the genres where most efforts were made recently in the Korean industry to establish franchises. This is thanks to the fact that these genres already have an established fan base and offer the possibility to expand their universes at will to fit novel ideas. In 2018, CJ ENM launched an international specialty film label, 413 Pictures, that specializes in thriller and horror films, while Lotte held a horror film screenplay contest in collaboration with Hive Media Corp., the production company behind *Gonjiam: Haunted Asylum*. The Korean horror film

series *Whispering Corridors* (started in 1998) has been revived with a sixth title 11 years after the previous instalment one. Titled *Whispering Corridors 6: The Humming*, it premiered at the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival earlier this year.

Amidst this trend, what Director YEON Sang-ho is trying to do with his franchise is close to a Korean equivalent of James WAN’s horror universe. A prominent figure of the zombie subgenre with his *Train to Busan* franchise, YEON has recently created a new horror universe with Lezhin Studio. It started with *The Cursed*, an occult horror TV series penned by YEON that aired on tvN, a Korean network owned by CJ ENM, in early 2020. The film *The Cursed: Again*, a theatrical version that will expand on this supernatural world, is already in production. That the film is about monsters from the Korean folklore called *jae-cha-yi* – corpses moving by occult magic similar in a way to the original concept of zombies, which were reanimated by Voodoo shamans – is sure to pique the curiosity of *Train to Busan* fans. YEON is also set to direct a new Netflix gore horror series, *Hellbound* (6 episodes), based on his animation short *The Hell* (2003). Science-fiction has been the first genre to bloom in contemporary Korean literature. As Korea’s audiovisual technologies and scale have reached a level where it is now possible to represent science-fiction on screens, the genre has become more prominent in films and on television. The space sci-fi movie *Space Sweepers*, financed and distributed by Merry Christmas, is particularly representative with its KRW



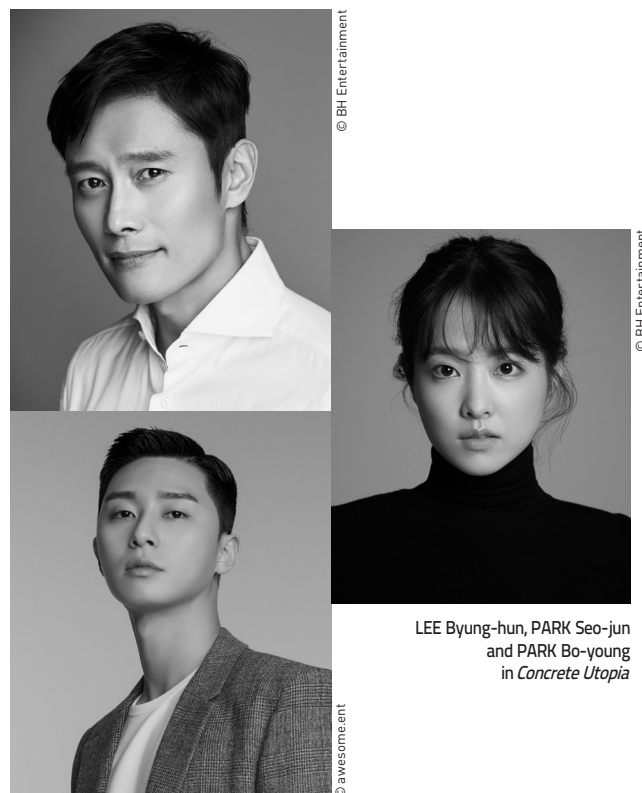
Webtoon *The Hell* based on YEON Sang-ho’s short animation is to be made into a Netflix series

24 billion (approximately \$20 million) budget, the largest among Korean films this year. It received a lot of attention when it was announced that the film will be followed by individual TV series, each in the same universe but featuring a different character. The story is set in 2092, when humanity has left a devastated Earth to create a new home in the orbit of a satellite, and follows the crew of *The Victory*, a space junk collector. Director JO Sung-hee, who made the fantasy melodrama *A Werewolf Boy* (2012), is working again with SONG Joong-ki. He is joined by KIM Tae-ri of *The Handmaiden* (2016), who plays the captain of the ship, JIN Seon-kyu of *Extreme Job* (2019) and YOO Hae-jin of *The Pirates*. Although its release was postponed due to COVID-19, the similarly named original webtoon the film is based on was the talk of the town as it recorded 5 million accumulated views across 15 episodes over the summer. The production company considers this as a positive signal for the prospects of a transmedia universe.

SF8 is an eight-part sci-fi TV series that was released on Korean VOD streaming platform Wavve and aired on TV network MBC. As the Korean equivalent of the British series *Black Mirror*, the series is an anthology of 50-minutes episodes each made by a different director and adapted from a creative Korean sci-fi novel. “There is not a single young writer in Korea who doesn’t do sci-fi stories”, says director MIN Kyu-dong, who helmed the project. Leaving the door open for a Season 2, he commented, “These authors have produced 10 years’ worth of interrogations about Korean and human things.” Some sci-fi writers have already sold the adaptation rights for all of their short stories and novels. The emergence of a Korean equivalent to the *Star Wars* or *Blade Runner* franchises may not be a distant dream anymore.

The union of shared universes and VOD

Amid the abundance of VOD services from Hollywood media giants such as Netflix and Disney+, the attempts by Korea-based VOD services to be competitive in the development of original content have also been encouraging the creation of shared universes. The aforementioned *SF8* series is one of the original projects that Wavve, a joint venture between SK Telecom and Korea’s three major terrestrial broadcasters, has financed this year, for a total investment of 60 billion KRW (USD 51 million). KakaoTV has also been aggressive in the release of original content recently, and Watcha is holding a series script contest with cash prizes for a total of KRW 50 million (USD 43,000). Both established and rookie



LEE Byung-hun, PARK Seo-jun
and PARK Bo-young
in *Concrete Utopia*

writers are eligible, and proposals and screenplays must be for series projects composed of at least 8 episodes of maximum 20 minutes.

Based on the success of the Disney and Pixar animations and the MCU, Disney+ is now creating individual series for the characters of its universes, and the original content series that Netflix was the first to introduce have become more popular worldwide with each new season. Looking back on these successes, franchises based on shared universes have proven to be a guaranteed model for profit in an entertainment industry now in dire need of stable income structures. Besides, filmmakers are up for the challenge. Director PARK Hoon-jung has expressed his intention to direct the sequels to both his box-office hits, *New World* (2013) and *The Witch: Part 1 - The Subversion* (2018), which he wrote and directed. In addition to the theatrical versions, there is also the possibility that both stories will be turned into TV series. Another idea going around is to produce a TV series which would be broadcast on TV and available on VOD platforms, with the final act of the story being released as a film in theaters. New universes are being built to develop Korean cinema during the pandemic. 

by NA Wonjeong (Joongang Daily, Film Journalist)

CERTAIN PIECES OF

**5 Unmissable
Korean Independent Films
in 2020**



Move the Grave



Fukuoka

OUR LIVES



An Old Lady



A Bedsore



Days in a Summer

Since February, a number of Korean films have brought consolation to audiences in theaters across the country despite the unprecedented circumstances caused by Covid-19. Even in these difficult times, Korean independent films such as *The House of Us*, *House of Hummingbird*, *Maggie*, *Baseball Girl* and *Moving On* have drawn critical acclaim in and out of Korea. Hoping to further such achievements, this section introduces five unmissable Korean independent films. The delicate portraits of certain moments that society and individuals must endure in *Move the Grave*, *Fukuoka*, *A Bedsore*, *An Old Lady* and *Days in a Summer* will show us how far Korean independent cinema has come.

by Kim Hye-seon (Film Journalist)



A Family Stuck Between Tradition and Progress

Move the grave

DIRECTOR JEONG Seung-o

CAST JANG Ri-woo, LEE Sun-hee, GONG Min-jeong,
YOONKEUM Sun-ah



In JEONG Seung-o's minutely observed debut *Move the Grave*, single mother Hye-young and her sisters gather to drive down to their hometown in the countryside. They have to move their father's remains, as his gravesite lies in an area that has been earmarked for redevelopment. The siblings meet outside Danggogae Station, the last stop on Seoul's subway line 4, far up in a northeast corner of the city, where low-rent dwellings squeeze up against a mountain range. This is literally the end of the line – there is no place else to go.

Fighting the patriarchy

Before meeting her sisters, Hye-young has to pick up her son from school, where he has been acting out, and before that she was told at work that she should resign when she returns from the maternity leave she has requested. When she picks up her sisters Geum-ok and Geum-hee at the station, she keeps her troubles to herself, and shortly after they set off, they also pick up Hye-yeon, their youngest sibling.

The four sisters are completely different from one another, but they are all dealing with personal struggles. Geum-ok is stuck with a cheating husband who she leans on financially, Geum-hee is strapped for cash as she contemplates marriage, and Hye-yeon is a student who can't contain her fury against the hypocrisies and double-standards of the male-driven society they all inhabit. Despite their differences, these four characters share a special bond tinged by protective tenderness as well as their family-related tensions, which JEONG's script gradually lets us in on. They are at times easy-going and gregarious, but their playfulness can just as quickly boil over into rage, which provides the film with memorable shouting matches.

The only sibling not coming along for the ride is the incommunicado Seung-rak, the only, and thus automatically eldest, son. Their destination is another dead end, a small, sparsely inhabited island that they can only reach by a ferry terminal, which becomes a purgatory which this group of characters is forced to stay at for longer than expected at several points during the narrative. Once off the ferry, they meet their father's older brother and his wife. The woman fusses over the reunion, but the man remains at a distance, and coolly insists that the ceremony cannot proceed without the eldest son present, which invokes the sisters' exasperation and especially Hye-yeon's uncontrollable anger.

Unable to counter this patriarchal display, they must return to the city and seek out their loafer of a brother. He is

hiding from them in a basement apartment, which they eventually track down thanks to his ex-lover Yoon-hwa, who has her own axe to grind. Yoon-hwa joins them on their journey, adding a new dimension to the negative consequences of patriarchy that each of these women is forced to contend with.

Exploring familiar territory

These sisters go about their busy lives in an urban space, while what remains of their kin clings to old-fashioned values at another dead end. Yet these women spend most of their time shuttling between these spaces, unmoored in the inexorable tug of war between tradition and progress, left with only themselves and their frustrations. We gradually come to realize that their individual woes are in fact born of similar hardships and the root cause of all their pain is patriarchy.

Move the Grave elegantly explores familiar territory – the fraught intersection of modernity and tradition – through clever juxtapositions and thoughtful metaphors. Even more effective is its wide-ranging and seamless investigation of outdated patriarchal norms, and in this respect it calls to mind the hit sensation that was *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* (2019). What the films also share is GONG Min-jeong, who plays Geum-hee, one of the standout actresses in a uniformly excellent cast that also features JANG Ri-woo (Hye-young), LEE Sun-hee (Geum-ok), YOONKEUM Sun-ah (Hye-yeon) and newcomer SONG Hee-jun (Yoon-hwa). While the film guides us to be sympathetic to the plights of these women and beckons us to recognize how patriarchy affects them all, it also evinces a sense of nostalgia. The erasure of tradition and the issue of what to do with their father's remains – reinter them or cremate them – bring with them a new, complicated set of emotions.

JEONG's film trudges through some dark thematic territory and doesn't shy away from hinting at the desperation felt by its protagonists, yet it is also tempered by its levity, much of it thanks to its wonderful cast, and also its mutable visual themes. The film's very title suggests that even a final resting place lacks true permanence, but on the other hand, while the first place we meet the sisters is at a dead end in a far corner of Seoul, the film ends with them on an open road. Each of them may be facing uncertain futures, but this closing image is also hopeful - their destinies are not set in stone.

by Pierce Conran

In the Dream of Love

Fukuoka

DIRECTOR ZHANG Lu

CAST KWON Hae-hyo, YOON Je-moon, PARK So-dam

Je-moon runs a second-hand bookstore in Seoul, where a quirky girl named So-dam is pretty much the only regular. One day, So-dam suggests that they take a trip to Fukuoka. Je-moon hopes to meet up with his old friend from college, Hae-hyo. Je-moon and Hae-hyo used to be close friends in college, but the two drifted apart and stayed out of touch for 28 years because they'd fallen for the same girl. It turns out that Hae-hyo owns a small bar in Fukuoka, and the three begin to explore the city – eating, drinking and talking together. This much is the film's ostensible plot. However, there are countless hidden “tricks” in the film that cannot be explained in simple terms. Depending on how you understand these tricks, the film can be re-interpreted in many different ways. One thing is for certain however – the film deals with the theme of love, and faithfully reflects its emotional



essence. The characters and narrative arc, based on the rules of “times of love”, bend, twist, merge and split at will.

Traveling through “times of love”

From start to finish, *Fukuoka* embraces dreamlike elements that may not be found in real life. At the beginning of the film, Je-moon takes a nap in his bookstore, and suddenly, So-dam turns up and suggests that they travel to Fukuoka. At first, Je-moon is dumbfounded by her suggestion, but the next moment, he hears Hae-hyo’s voice grumbling at him in his imagination. He rings up an acquaintance and finds out that Hae-hyo lives in Fukuoka. Je-moon and So-dam walk out of the dingy underground bookstore, and then the film cuts to downtown Fukuoka. Je-moon has been led to Fukuoka by both So-dam – a strange creature who seems to have fallen from the sky – and Hae-hyo’s voice that can’t have been heard in reality. As the story further unfolds, the three of them run into one bizarre incident after another.

This vacillation between fantasy and reality becomes even more evident in Fukuoka. The three of them – particularly So-dam – can somehow communicate with everyone regardless of language barriers. So-dam’s existence seems to hang precariously between fantasy and reality. She abruptly disappears and then appears again, and fluently communicates with Japanese and Chinese people who speak their own languages. Je-moon and Hae-hyo simply accept this inexplicable situation without a trace of doubt. So-dam acts as a go-between for the two men who are still awkward around each other. In fact, she seems to be a transcendental being who exists outside the real world and continues to lead the other two in a certain direction – so much so that Je-moon calls her “a wacko” and claims she has a supernatural power. In one episode, So-dam’s prophetic words that Hae-hyo’s regular who has not said a word in a decade will speak in Korean come true. As far as Je-moon and Hae-hyo are concerned, So-dam now has the power to tell the truth and predict the future. She suggests where they should go and what they should do, and leads the way, implying that her suggestions will bring about some good results. Throughout the journey, she constantly reminds her two companions that they closely resemble each other. Thanks to So-dam, Je-moon and Hae-hyo realize that they are in fact spitting images of each other.

The purest recollection

Then why are they so alike? At first, they are introduced as

romantic rivals who have lost touch with each other for 28 years. However, as the story unfolds, they appear to be the same souls trapped in times of love filled with an eternal vacuum. Even after all these years, they are still hung up on Soon-yi, the woman who two-timed them and then disappeared one day. In fact, she used to spend time both in the second-hand bookstore and Fukuoka, which explains why the two men still remain there despite the 30-year passage of time. In that respect, the two poems by YUN Dong-ju that feature in the film – ‘Self-portrait’ and ‘Temple of Love’ – are particularly significant. The ‘man’ described in the third person in ‘Self-portrait’ is in fact the poet himself, and similarly, Je-moon and Hae-hyo reflect each other like mirrors as they remain stuck in times of love that could be both transitory and eternal – as imagined by YUN Dong-ju in the harsh reality of the world. In a childlike state, they refuse to step into the real time and space and keep wandering around the streets of Fukuoka. The temple of love in the consciousness of the two men – who could be taken as one person – is where everything returns and re-appears suddenly as if in a dream. It is where the spatial and temporal dimensions of reality are rendered meaningless, and everything converges into one emotion. As the story continues, Fukuoka becomes a space that exists in everyone’s consciousness like déjàvu rather than a geographical space in reality.

The film starts and ends in Je-moon’s bookstore. After the dreamlike trip to Fukuoka, they return to the second-hand bookstore to complete a full circle. Before, So-dam interrupted Je-moon’s nap there. In the final sequence of the film, Je-moon and Hae-hyo each occupy one corner of the dreary bookstore as the phone rings loudly with a call from So-dam in Fukuoka. So-dam is gone, but Je-moon and Hae-hyo remain there. The two foolish captives of love – who seem to be one and the same person – are dimly visible in the labyrinthine space that resembles a human brain, under a round light that looks like the moon.

Fukuoka fully delves into the time-space of dreams – frequently observed across ZHANG Lu’s filmography. It considers why the inevitably past-oriented and conceptual theme of love is re-produced time and again in numerous works of art. In the end, the film reminds us that, like an elusive mirage, love is both an unsolved mystery and the soul of art, which we can neither revisit nor eliminate altogether.

by Choi Eun-young (Film Critic)



An Old Lady

DIRECTOR LIM Sun-ae

CAST YE Soo-jung, KIM Jung-gyeong, KI Joo-bong

The first thing that catches your eye when watching Director LIM Sun-ae's *An Old Lady* is the positioning of the camera. The camera stubbornly maintains its distance, even during moments when you expect it to zoom in on the characters. In doing so, the camera (and as a result the audience) maintains a level of distance from the events that transpire. This purposeful act of "distancing" is maintained throughout the film. "*An Old Lady* is a story about sexual abuse of the elderly." This sentence, which sums up the film, is saturated with the violence and discrimination that members of

one of Korea's most vulnerable classes have become all too familiar with. Unless you are young, healthy and male, there is little chance that you will be able to escape the prejudices that permeate society. In particular, sexism and ageism have seeped into every nook and cranny of the public domain, creating deep crevasses between people, not unlike the wrinkles on an elderly person's skin.

An Old Lady follows 69-year-old Hyo-jeong (YE Soo-jung), who is sexually assaulted by her physical therapist Lee Joong-ho (KIM Jung-gyeong). While some might take it as an overly dramatized story meant to provoke public indignation and attract attention, the director revealed that the film, in fact, takes its cues from an actual case. We assume the premise is fictional because stories of elderly rape, even if they come out, which they rarely do, are quickly covered up, and the victim is forced to suffer in silence. It's clear that, from start to finish, it took a great deal of courage to produce this film.

Maintaining a perfect distance

The film, notably, opens with a black screen, which continues for a painstaking two minutes and thirty seconds. In the darkness, we are only privy to the words exchanged between

the characters Hyo-jeong and Joong-ho. As we listen, it slowly becomes clear that we are witnessing Hyo-jeong being sexually harassed. “How often do you go swimming?” “You have very pretty legs.” “You don’t look old from behind.” Although we never see the actual crime occur, given that this exchange is taking place between a woman who has removed her clothing in front of a fully clothed man, the words Joong-ho spits out can unequivocally be categorized as sexual harassment. What’s worse is that the threat of all-out sexual assault continues to lurk in the darkness. Hyo-jeong lets out an uneasy laugh when she realizes Joong-ho’s intentions and the vulnerable position she is in. The verbal assault soon leads to rape. When Hyo-jeong asks, “How long do I have to stay like this?” Joong-ho replies, “Nine more minutes.” In the claustrophobic darkness, we quickly realize how long these nine minutes must be to a rape victim.

This opening scene shows that the director has no intention of hastily over-dramatizing the emotions experienced by the characters in the film. It is also an extreme example of “distancing,” as the camera’s gaze is totally obstructed by the darkness. All too often films will expose their viewers to scenes of sexual violence under the pretext of inciting public indignation and raising awareness. This film takes an alternative route: it guards its audience members against the threat of secondary victimization. Even without seeing, the audience is able to comprehend the severity of the situation. Our assumptions are later verified after Hyo-jeong returns to her daily life. She is startled by a microwave because the light it emits and the sound it makes remind her of the physical therapy clinic. She sometimes feels the urgent need to vomit. She is terrified when a child grabs her ankle at the swimming pool.

A history of violence

Director LIM Sun-ae’s unique approach to storytelling – revealing the truth without showing it to us – is what makes this movie so effective. For instance, by showing us Hyo-jeong as she is in the present, we indirectly learn of the violence she has endured throughout her life. Before Hyo-jeong began living with Dong-in (KI Joo-bong), she lived with her daughter, who she never had the time to see. She made her meager living by working as a caregiver at hospitals and nursing homes. Hyo-jeong had previously experienced sexual harassment at the hands of a patient she was looking after. The film emphasizes that Hyo-jeong – “an old lady” born in Korea in the 1940s – has constantly faced numerous

instances of violence throughout the 69 years of her life. If Korean society continues to show indifference towards some of its most vulnerable members, and efforts to prevent the many forms of violence inflicted on minorities are not made, cases like the one depicted in this film will continue to happen.

The everydayness of violence in our society is also revealed by how people treat Hyo-jeong after she reports the assault. The police officers, who should side with the victim and make every effort to reveal the truth of the matter, have a hard time believing that a handsome young man would sexually assault an old woman. Discriminatory remarks are meted out at the victim. For instance, one of Joong-ho’s co-workers rebukes her when she asks about him and asks her if she will take responsibility if he loses his job at the hospital. A nurse, who is an acquaintance of Hyo-jeong’s, chides her for not being more careful. What makes the situation all the more despairing is the fact that this sort of verbal violence does not at all feel out of place. These scenes seem to imply that perhaps we ourselves are not so different from these seemingly cold-hearted characters. Perhaps we have directed the same cold stares and harsh words at the Hyo-jeongs of the world. The pointed words aimed at the victim lay bare how we as a society have grown apathetic to inflicting pain on others. Nonetheless, *An Old Lady* does more than give us reason to feel resentment and anger: the film has an energy that ushers us forward. There have been other films that highlight the plight of victims of sexual assault; however, in this film, the main character neither hides the fact that she has been victimized nor silently agonizes over her experience. Immediately after the crime takes place, Hyo-jeong tells Dong-in that she is going to report the assault to the police and asks him to accompany her to the station. Through this act, the assault survivor refuses to be rendered powerless by societal norms. Moreover, Director LIM makes a conscious effort to ensure that the film is not overrun by sentiment, by distancing the camera, by obscuring our view, and by preventing us from too readily identifying with an overdramatized main character. In doing so, the film compels us to move beyond the immediate emotional response that we might feel from the sight of such injustice enacted on the screen. It forces us to reflect upon ourselves. *An Old Lady* is an unyielding, thoughtful and powerful debut film.

by LEE Hwa-jung (Film Journalist)

Nobody Can Escape Death and Aging

A Bedsore

DIRECTOR SHIM Hye-jung

CAST KIM Jong-gu, KANG Ae-sim, JEON Guk-hyang

A retired civil servant (KIM Jong-gu) suddenly declares his intention to get married—to none other than the immigrant live-in caretaker (KANG Ae-sim) who has been looking after his bedridden wife (JEON Guk-hyang) for several years. His grown children are taken by surprise by this shocking announcement. Yet, they cannot possibly argue against their father who has been paying for the nursing fees from his own pension. Nor do they have the heart to kick out the caretaker who has worked so diligently without complaint. Above all, none of them is prepared to take full responsibility for their mother who recently developed a bedsore on her back. Aware of the situation, the elderly man is determined to go through with it. This story of one family in *A Bedsore* deals with the themes



of death, aging and life that we are all bound to encounter. Director SHIM Hye-jung previously explored a similar subject in *The Camel and the Arab* (2014), where she looked into her delicate relationship with the immigrant woman who had been taking care of her mother on her sickbed for 12 years “I didn’t feel comfortable with her taking over my mother’s house,” she once explained. SHIM further expands her own feelings this time into a feature film. *A Bedsore* introduces a number of complex characters such as an elderly man who looks fine on the surface but is useless at domestic work, a middle-aged immigrant live-in caretaker who works energetically but feels anxious about her expired visa, and grown children who take a step back and walk a fine line between intervention and negligence.

Understanding our hidden desires

Gradually, we detect a moral flaw in every character. The elderly man plans to marry his resident caretaker despite his sick wife. This is partly because he hopes to renew the immigrant woman’s visa so she can continue to take care of his wife. At the same time, however, he is drawn to the caretaker’s lively energy that contrasts with the state of his dying wife. At one point, he leaves his bedridden wife alone in the house to secretly follow the caretaker on her day off. However, when he and the caretaker get into an argument, he ends up slapping her in the face. We can’t help but be put off by the patriarch’s selfish and violent behavior. Those around him also demonstrate shortcomings both big and small. As an illegal immigrant worker, the live-in caretaker maintains her “underdog” position in order to make a living, but on her days off, she takes clothes from the sick lady’s wardrobe without permission and goes out to let her hair down. The man’s daughter (KIM Do-young) often comes by, and although she knows what is going on, she doesn’t actively intervene to improve the situation since she is not prepared to take on the responsibility. The eldest son (KIM Jae-rok), who runs a fruit store, and the second son, who is in the USA, choose to stay out of it all. The eldest son’s wife (KWON Mi-a) comes up with new suggestions at times, but she, too, remains a mere spectator. Ironically, while the characters are thus exposed, we come to understand them better. Based on her own experience of dealing with her mother’s long struggle with illness, SHIM Hye-jung gazes at each character with warmth and empathy. Out of fear of death, the elderly man decides to abandon his wife and seek vitality. The caretaker constantly looks for



a better life regardless of the law. The children burdened with their own problems find excuses to turn a blind eye. It is not difficult to see our hidden desires in their faces. We understand why they behave so disappointingly in the midst of old age, death and life.

Long-standing and stable relationship

The biggest incident occurs towards the end of the film. The caretaker is taken into police custody and a fire breaks out in the house with only the elderly couple left in it. This is certainly a surprise ending. Who reported the illegal immigrant to the police? The film does not give any answers. What will happen to the elderly couple left in the house filled with smoke and what about their children? The film ends there, but the director expects that “things will be even tougher from now on.” *A Bedsore* is about the anxiety that people feel when they are stuck in their positions for a long time and thus start rotting; the long-standing and stale family relationships cannot be easily rearranged. These problems will haunt them for as long as they are alive. The moment we encounter *A Bedsore*, their concerns strike a chord with us since we all share the common destiny of old age and death. If you become so sick that you have to rely on others to feed you, or if your parents find themselves in that situation, how will you go on living? One thing is for sure—nobody is exempt from such worries. *A Bedsore* received both the Jury Prize and the INALCO Jury Grand Prize at the 26th Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema.

by Flora Got Park (MOVIST Reporter, Film Journalist)

The Sights Some Young People Encounter

Days in a Summer

DIRECTOR OH Jung-seok

CAST KIM Yura, KIM Lok-kyoung

Seung-hee (KIM Yura) who lives in Seoul, returns to her hometown on Geoje Island to sort through her mother's belongings. A quiet island, Geoje is located off the southern coast, north of Jeju Island and west of Busan. It is regarded as a holiday destination for city folks, but for Seung-hee, it is nothing but the dull and familiar place where she spent her childhood. After exchanging pleasantries with a friend she hadn't met in a long time, she comes across some guys who invite her for a drink. These tourists who went to the sea for a vacation already have red faces. Aware that they will of course return to their normal life after having some short-lived fun here, she feels quite distant. Awkward introductions, humdrum tales of heroic exploits at the army, and silly jokes are exchanged, and yet Seung-hee's mind is somewhere else. She has already finished sorting and packing her mother's clothes and other belongings. However, having taken a leave of absence from work, she does not feel like going back to Seoul right away. Struggling with her life and a relationship in the busy city, she briefly considers staying in her hometown. Without much savings nor

any work she would like to do, she doesn't have a clear idea of what she could do in Geoje Island, but that doesn't mean she feels up to intensely preparing herself for something new. She spends her days oversleeping, enjoying the breeze from an electric fan, strolling the countryside roads around the village and going out at sunset to spend time with her grandmother who works in the field. Her sluggish days go by. There is literally nothing happening.

A comfort delicately handed over

As if embodying Seung-hee's sentiment, the camera demonstrates a lot of patience in the way it contemplates her routine through long-takes. The chirping of the insects hiding in the grass, the gentle murmur of the waves crashing on the shore, the whoosh of the cars passing by on a nearby road, and the muffled clamor of television coming from a store that has seen several generations of owners all complement the flow of images, which are devoid of any complex mise-en-scene or excessive display of emotion from the characters. "Young people who are anxious, for whom the things they wanted to try didn't work as intended, and who cannot rely





on their families even though they want to, sometimes they prefer to keep that sadness deep inside instead of showing their emotions”, says director OH Jung-seok, who was in his twenties when he made the film. This is why, when the woman heads to the coast near the lighthouse with a fishing rod to soothe her mind and meets a stranger (KIM Lok-kyoung) who works for a shipyard, the viewers may naturally expect some kind of romance or an inkling of humanism, but that wish hardly comes true.

Seung-hee and the shipyard guy meet for meals and go fishing together, but they remain excessively composed. Far from having the rebellious spirit to reject the world altogether, they don’t even indulge in self-pity over their situation. More extravagant are the strange men arguing back and forth or the small mistakes they make under the influence of alcohol. Their passive and spiritless faces symbolize today’s young people. The world does not change once you have expressed yourself, and unless you overcome the human condition whereby nothing is certain, emotional diversion is nothing but a burden. Seung-hee only recognizes that this young shipyard worker, who goes to work in the

same uniform every day and whose only hobby is fishing, is someone who has been put in a similar situation to hers. The two share some sense of kinship and meager comfort as two souls belonging to the same “people”, in that they eat sundae (Korean blood sausage) by dipping it in seasoned soybean paste (in the Geoje Island way) rather than in salt (à la Seoul). This is how these scenes of “patiently and silently scrutinized consolation”, as distributor Cinesopa CEO SUNG Song-yi put it, translate in the film.

Now is the time to wait

The climax in this quiet story is the sequence when they climb to Pyewang Fortress (also known as Dundockgi Castle), a historical site on Geoje Island. Built during the Late Silla period, one of the ancient Korean kingdoms, this fortress is known as the place where King Uijong (1146-1170) was later incarcerated following a military coup during the Goryeo Dynasty era. This place, where the one person who should have displayed the greatest authority and prowess had to spend time confined with his hands tied, reflects the current situation the two young people are in. When they reach the terrace by the sea where the fortress stands, they are overwhelmed by the placid scenery made up of the pale purple sky and the bottomless sea. Where the two meet, the contours of big and small islands emerge faintly. The landscape looks elusively beautiful, but it is actually distant and out of reach. This scene seems to describe the time these youths are spending in exile as well as the life they have yet ahead of them. One day, they will become more forthcoming in their lives than they are now. They will be able to openly express their emotions and to regularly vent their complaints about the world. There will come a day when they will enjoy the luxury of sharing their concerns and affection, as human beings, with a significant other, who may or may not be the person they just met now. However, the time has not come. The moment when Seung-hee, who had yet to recover from the loss of her mother, faces the unexpected death of her grandmother, for some reason the shipyard guy is nowhere to be seen. Without anyone to share her grief with, she climbs to the fortress again. She watches alone the scenery at dusk. The distant landscape is getting darker. Where will she go now? What will she do for a living? A youth’s waiting time is running out.

by Flora Got PARK (MOVIST Reporter, Film Journalist)



Moving On

Life Still Goes On

A real touch of living in
Moving On, Baseball Girl, Jazzy Misfits and Fanfare

Several Korean films released in the first half of this year have focused on specific places. Each space serves as the emotional background for protagonists within the film, and sometimes functions as a character for the audience to appreciate. *Moving on* focus on a summer shared by three generations of a family, *Baseball Girl* follows a girl's struggle to become a female professional baseball player, and both *Jazzy Misfits* and *Fanfare* play out against the backdrop of Itaewon, Seoul's cultural melting pot.

Moving On

A two-story house in Incheon with memories

Moving on by director YUN Dan-bi is about the summer of two siblings, Okju (CHOI Jung-woon) and Dongju (PARK Seung-jun). After their father (YANG Heung-joo) went broke, the children moved into their grandfather's (KIM Sang-dong) old two-story house. Their aunt, who secretly decided to get divorced, joins them there. Rather than any specific event, the film focuses more on the emotions and surroundings of these characters. While the extended family shares meals, as well as laughter and tears, the time within these ordinary days flows inexorably toward something that will be lost someday. Over the course of this summer, during which the house transforms from an old man's lonely home into a family house, until it becomes a space marked by the grandfather's absence, this brother and sister grow a great deal.

The film makes us recall our childhood summer nights. Their special summer connects us to the summer nights we remember. This sense of tranquil connection is the precious gift that *Moving On* provides us with. The old man's western-style two-story home, which occupies most of the background, is the essential element that makes with possible. The production team discovered the old two-story house from the location database of the Incheon Film Commission. It belongs to an old couple. The house contains 50 years of the couple's history, from when they raised their family until the time their children left home. After the director visited the location, she decided to shoot the space as it was as much as possible. "When I went there, the space felt like a character itself. No matter how well arranged or decorated the place was, it would have been difficult to recreate that lived-in feel. My art department would never have thought of putting the sewing machine on the second floor or the Bodhidharma painting on the wall," says director YUN.

The production team adjusted the kitchen and living room, which appeared in the film several times. Other things are just as they have been as the old couple have lived there. The team removed one of two sofas and placed a stereo instead of a TV in the living room, seeing as an old man lives there alone in the story. The scene during which he listens to music on the stereo is very memorable, and is crucial in connecting the man and his granddaughter. The director initially thought of a desolate vegetable garden but instead used the well-kept garden as it was. "When I wrote the script, I thought that an old man would not tend to his garden. However, some people take good care of plants even though they aren't in good



shape. Rather than changing the environment for the script, I decided to use the atmosphere untouched. So I revised the setting so that he had been managing the garden while his grown-up children stayed out of touch," explains the director. In the film, the family picks cherry tomatoes in the vegetable garden. The vitality in the house lays a foundation for connecting the old man with his grandchildren.

The little door at the stairs between the first and second floor was something the director hadn't imagined when she wrote the story. Opening and closing the door reflects each character's situation and emotion. It is closed when the family discusses the old man. When the boy is excited about a gift, he opens the door to go upstairs to see his sister. She sometimes locks the door to separate herself from the family. The second floor and its balcony are like her hideout.

The film also shows other places when the girl goes out. She meets a boy at Incheon Freedom Park, looking down at the sea. When she is uncomfortable with her family and is disappointed at the boy who doesn't understand her, she rides downhill on a bike. The scene was shot in Subong Park near the house.

Baseball Girl

From clay to grass fields

A baseball field is at the center of *Baseball Girl*. Genius pitcher Soo-in (LEE Joo-young) has a hard time becoming a professional player on this dream field as a girl. To her, the ballpark isn't just a place of cheering but a place of struggle against prejudice. The director intended to show different

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The women's hunt takes place in the complex residential area near the Dokkaebi market. The director wanted to depict the Itaewon district, not as a center of nightlife but as a place of living.

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phases of space, from her school playground and the baseball tryout field all the way to a real ballpark. “To show this progression, I searched for a clay field for her school team,” says director CHOI Yun-tae. It wasn’t easy to get location permissions because student players had to practice. After his persistent requests, he was able to use Baekseok High School in Ilsan and Shinjung High School in Seoul. Shinjung High, famous for its softball team, had an excellent indoor training facility. CHOI shot Soo-in’s practice scene at their indoor center.

Her tryout scene was shot at the Hwaseong Dream Park Baseball Field in Gyeonggi province. Opened in 2015, it is the largest little league ballpark with eight diamonds. SK Wyverns, a Korean professional baseball team, appears in the film several times. The director planned to shoot at the team’s training center for minor league players. However, the maintenance department expressed concerns over potential damage to the grass. The director completely revised the story and shot the last scene of Soo-in’s expectant face as she looks at SK Happy Dream Park, the team’s home stadium in Incheon. It was shot at the empty stadium as the team played an away game. She is looking into the field from the players’ entrance because the production team wasn’t allowed to enter the field due to the strict grass maintenance.

The director wanted to show the real professional team and its facility. “The KBO League will soon commemorate its 40th anniversary, which means baseball is a popular sport in Korea. If the film doesn’t show a real team, the entire film may look fake. That is why I used real ballparks, a real team and the logo,” says the director. SK Wyverns willingly gave permission to the film to use its name and logo. The director explains that the team extended its generosity when the film was in pre-production in 2018, when they had won the Korean Series.



Jazzy Misfits* and *Fanfare

A new side of Itaewon

Itaewon in Seoul is the district of housing and commerce for GIs and expatriates. With the most diverse cultural identity, the area is famous for its club scene among young people. *Jazzy Misfits* is about a one-day chase between a mother and daughter in Itaewon. Sun-deok (KIM Eun-young), a singer whose stage name is Blue, is visited by her mother (CHO Min-soo), whom she hasn't spoken to in years. The mother came to search for her youngest daughter who ran away from home. The two keep arguing but join hands together to hunt for the missing girl because she stole her mother's monthly rent and Sun-deok's emergency fund. The pursuit draws diverse people such as a foreign-looking but Korean-born deliveryman, a single

mom, a gay couple, a drag performer, etc. These minority groups experience social prejudices. Sun-deok and her mother are also shunned by people because of their appearances and personalities. "Itaewon is the only place where nobody cares about other people. I thought it would be the perfect place to talk about prejudice," explains director NAM Yeon-woo about showing all kinds of people. The director, who lives in the area, contacted the tattoo parlor and the clothing store in his neighborhood for the film.

The singer's place is a real guesthouse in the district. The production team liked the place that looks down into the Bogwang-dong area from steep stairs and hills rather than the flashy club districts near Hamilton Hotel. The women's hunt takes place in the complex residential area near the Dokkaebi market. The director wanted to depict the Itaewon district, not as a center of nightlife but as a place of living.

Fanfare by LEE Don-ku was also shot in Itaewon. As the title means the start of a festival or war, the film is about a hellish night that unfolds when some bad guys happen to gather in a bar on Halloween. Due to a murder at the bar, no one can leave the place freely. The location is Mmm Records in Itaewon. As the story unfolds in one space, the first and second floors are decorated in different concepts. In the film, Itaewon isn't illustrated as a festive area but as a secretive crime scene, which arouses the chilling thrill of genre cinema. ㉠

by LEE Eun-sun (Film Journalist)

Pursuing Indisputable Presence

LEE Jung-jae

Deliver Us From Evil presents an infernal chase between two men. In the rather simple framework of a race for revenge, it is down to Ray (played by LEE Jung-jae) to create suspense. Ray is determined to follow In-nam—who assassinated Ray's older brother—to the end of the world to take his revenge. What makes Ray utterly terrifying is that apart from his will to kill, it is impossible to predict his psychological or behavioral patterns. Inevitably, he becomes a source of overwhelming fear that haunts us in unexpected ways. In the end, this highly cinematic character makes the film stand out from other thrillers.

LEE Jung-jae made his screen debut in BAE Chang-ho's *The Young Man* (1994). Since then, he has played various characters both on TV and the silver screen—a central character in the melodrama *An Affair* (1998), a miserable youth in *City of the Rising Sun* (1999), a man who goes from being a slave to a tribune leading angry people in *The Uprising* (1999), characters with unwavering love in *Il Mare* (2000) and *Last Present* (2001), and a comedic character in *Oh! Brothers* (2003). This wide spectrum is proof of his industriousness as an actor.

The Thieves (2012)—in which he played the irresistibly charming Popeye—proved to be a turning point in his career, which had faltered briefly in the mid-to-late 2000s. In 2013, he made his way up once again, playing such striking characters as the tiger-like Prince Suyang in *The Face Reader* and LEE Ja-sung, an undercover man facing a heartless world in *New World*. Ever since, LEE's strategy of making his presence felt even at the cost of stepping back a little has worked successfully—YEOM Seok-jin in *Assassination* (2015), King of the Underworld in the *Along with the Gods* series, Pastor Park in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (2019) and Ray in *Deliver Us From Evil*.



LEE continues to venture beyond the realm of acting. For example, in 2016, he and actor JUNG Woo-sung—with whom he'd struck up a long-lasting friendship after starring in *City of the Rising Sun* together—co-founded the showbiz agency Artist Company, which has recently expanded into a film and TV production company. In fact, LEE has already announced his intention to direct films. His directorial debut, *Hunt* (working title), is scheduled to start filming in 2021. It is an action-driven spy film about two men from the Agency for National Security Planning, who chase after the mastermind behind North Korea's espionage operation and come across a shocking truth. LEE's debut performance in *The Young Man* earned him the title "a man of eternal youth." Fittingly, actor LEE Jung-jae rises to each new challenge with a spirit that remains as youthful as ever. 📽

by LEE Eun-sun (Film Journalist) | photographed by Artist Company

SHOOT IN KOREA

SUPPORTED PROJECTS

- To All the Boys 3 (TBD)
- #JESUISLA (2018)
- Black Panther (2017)
- Okja (2016)
- Sense8 (2014-2016)
- Avengers : Age of Ultron (2014)



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